

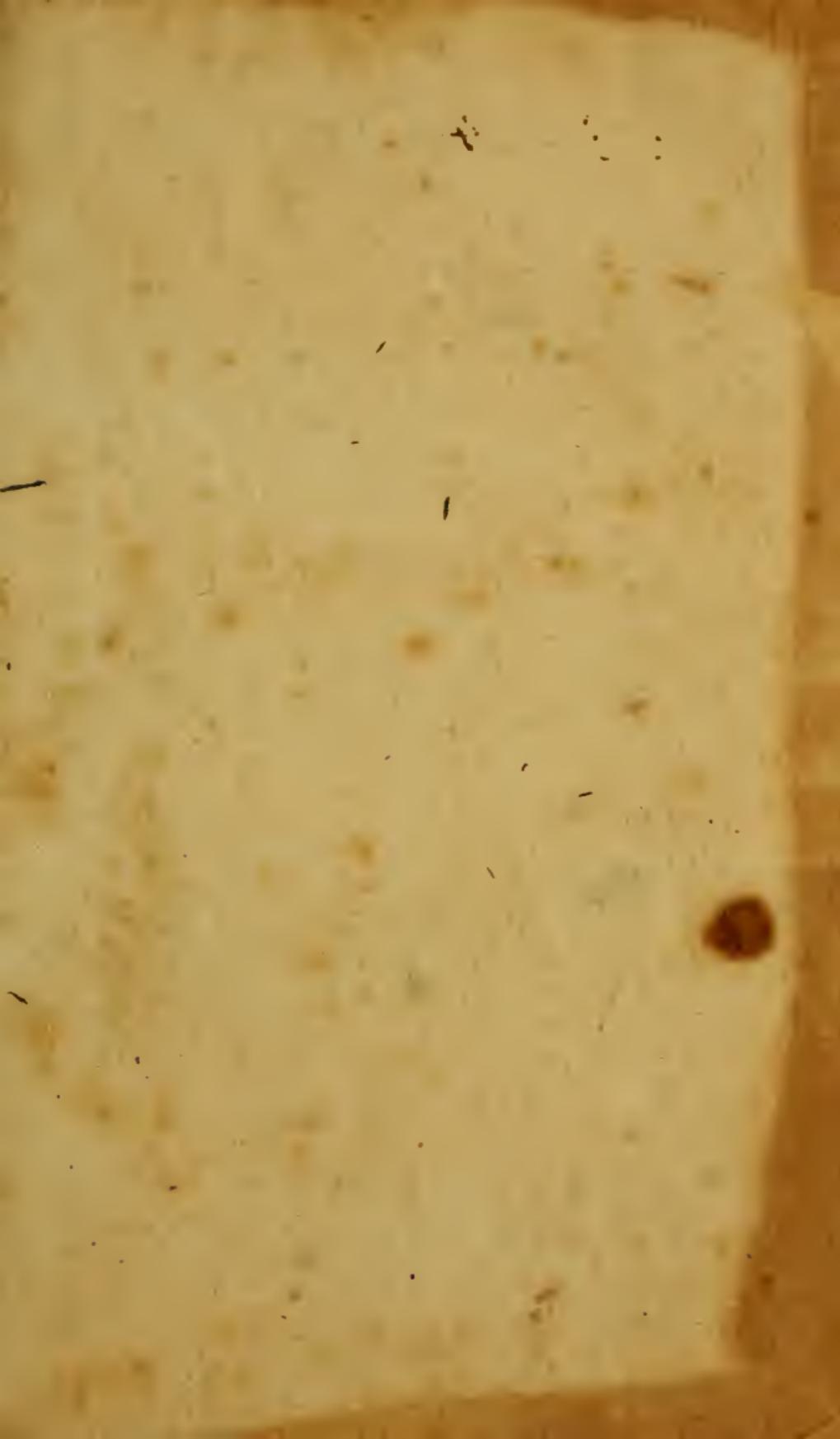
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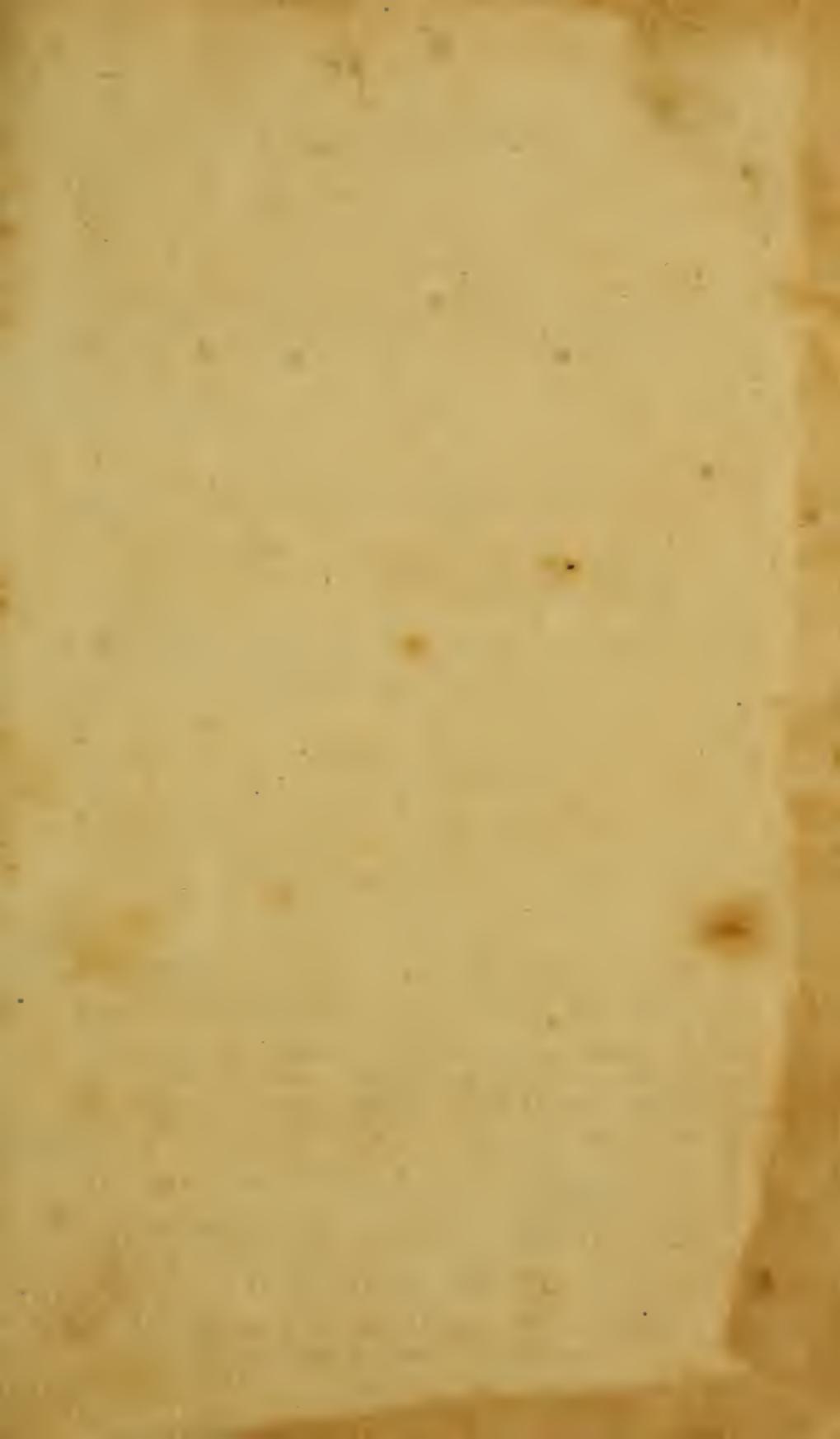
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GLAD TIDINGS

TO

Perishing Sinners:

OR,

THE GENUINE GOSPEL

A

COMPLETE WARRANT FOR THE UNGODLY
TO BELIEVE IN JESUS.

By Rev. ABRAHAM BOOTH.

Nothing is requisite, in order to a participation of Christ and his Benefits, but a grant from God.

MR. J. HERVEY.

God justifieth the UNGODLY. This is that expression which hath stirred up so much wrath among many, and on account whereof some seem to be much displeased with the Apostle himself.

DR. J. OWEN.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY STEPHEN C. USTICK;
Sold at No. 79, North Third Street.

1797.



P R E F A C E.

THAT the subject here discussed is of sufficient importance to demand serious attention, whether the principle defended be true or false, must be admitted by every competent judge; because of its intimate connection with the doctrine of justification before God: for that has ever been considered, by our most eminent Protestant writers, both Lutherans and Calvinists, as an article of the greatest moment. Thus, for instance, Dr. JOHN OWEN: ‘In my judgment, LUTHER spake ‘the truth when he said, *To lose the article of Justifica- ‘tion, would at once be the loss of the whole Christian ‘faith.* And I wish he had not been a true prophet, ‘when he foretold that, in the following ages, the doc- ‘trine hereof would be again obscured *.’—The leading principle maintained in this Publication, is closely con-

* *Doctrine of Justification. General Considerations*, p. 103. Glasgow, 1760. Thus, also, that celebrated foreigner, WITSIUS: ‘Diffundit se Justificationis doctrina per totum theologiæ corpus, ‘et prout fundamenta hic, vel bene, vel male, jacta sunt, eo uni ‘versum ædificium vel solidius augustiusque ascendit, vel male ‘statuminatum fœdam minitatur ruinam.’ *Oecon. Fœd.* Lib. III. Cap. viii. § 1.

nected also, with Christian experience, with devotional practice, and with general obedience to God. The better that principle is understood, and the more its practical influence is felt; the more benign will its genuine tendency appear, with regard to peace of conscience, and liberty in devotional duties; to the habitual exercise of holy affections, and a course of conformity to the divine commands. It is, by the Author at least, considered in this light.

That prudence and caution are necessary, however, in stating and defending the sentiment here adopted, the Writer presumes, will be acknowledged: because it is a kind of *middle point*, between Arminianism, and Antinomianism—between seeking acceptance with God, *as it were, by the works of the law**; and renouncing obedience to the divine precepts, as if they had lost their obliging power, or as if our personal obedience were of no importance in any respect. The former of which is pernicious legality; the latter, destructive licentiousness. Whether the Writer have handled the subject with all that wisdom and care, which its delicacy and importance demand, he dares not assert: but, with sincerity he can declare, that the discussion of it has been attended with much thought, and with frequent prayer.

* Rom. ix. 32.

Though the Author detest the *real* principles of what is properly called *Antinomianism*; though, many years ago, in the most public manner, he laboured to explode those pernicious principles*; and though, in the present Performance, he have endeavoured to guard against being misunderstood; yet he is not without suspicion, that some of his readers will be ready to consider the main position defended, as having a licentious cast. But, should that be the case, he is prepared for it, so as to be neither offended, nor surprised. Nay, while fully persuaded that there is no just ground for such a conclusion, he will consider it as a presumption in favour of the point maintained. Because it is evident, that the doctrine of grace, as preached and recorded by Paul, was treated in a similar manner †. He has long been of opinion, that whoever exhibits the *true glory* of divine grace, and the *high importance* of Christian duty, according to the apostolic pattern; will be considered by many as an Antinomian, and by some as an Arminian. Does a minister of the gospel display the absolute freeness, the infinite riches, and the allsufficiency of that grace which is revealed in Jesus Christ, as an immediate ground of encouragement for the vilest of sinners to confide in him? the doctrine will be stigmatized by

* See *The Death of Legal Hope, the Life of Evangelical Obedience*, Sect. VII. Edit. 3d.

† Rom. iii. 8, 31. vi. 1, 2, 3, 15. ix. 14—24.

multitudes, as manifestly licentious. Does he, as ministerial duty requires, warmly insist, that, be the professed articles of any one's theological creed ever so scriptural; yet, if he be not habitually mindful of the divine precepts; if he keep not the example of Christ in view; if his heart have not an heavenly turn; he is a stranger to the power of evangelical truth, and unworthy to be called a Christian? his preaching will be offensive to the mere formalist; be censured as uncharitable; and reproached, by some, as detestably legal.

The grand principle here defended, is far from being novel; it having been adopted by many Protestant writers of high reputation in the churches of Christ: from some of whom, and especially from Dr. JOHN OWEN, a number of quotations appear in the following work. To the producing of which quotations the Author was induced, partly for the sake of that argument which they contain; in proof of his main point; and partly to evince, that the sentiments here maintained have been espoused by persons of the first eminence, among professed Christians of Calvinistic principles.

That the number of quotations, from the most respectable Calvinistic authors, with regard to the leading position, might have been greatly increased; every one, much acquainted with their theological writings, must acknowledge. Mr. DAVID WILSON, when vindicating

various Writers, denominated POPULAR PREACHERS, against the attacks of gross misrepresentation, of illiberal censure, and of sarcastical contempt ; in speaking relative to the main subject of the following pages, says : ‘ They [the Popular Preachers] were very ready to ‘ acknowledge, that those who are most punctual in the ‘ external performance of religious duties, are frequently ‘ in a far more dangerous condition than publicans and ‘ harlots, or those who lead the most wicked and flagitious lives ; because, through the corruption of their own hearts, all their duties, religious services, endeavours and attainments, are too often made subservient ‘ to the gratification of their pride, and the cherishing ‘ of those presumptuous hopes and imaginations whereby ‘ they are hardened in their opposition to the true grace ‘ of God manifested in the gospel. And they were ‘ equally ready to own, that the sovereign mercy of ‘ God, with regard to believers at first conversion, does ‘ still prevent every good action, motion, or qualifica- ‘ tion in them ; every thing that can be supposed to have ‘ the least tendency to qualify them for the divine ap- ‘ probation—They affirmed, that the foundation of a ‘ sinner’s confidence and comfort lies, not in any good ‘ works performed by him ; in any consciousness of his ‘ own sincerity ; or any experience of a gracious and ‘ sanctifying work of the divine Spirit upon his own ‘ soul ; but wholly without him, in the promises and ‘ testimony of God in the gospel—To maintain, that

‘ sinners are justified freely, through the righteousness of Christ imputed, and apprehended by faith alone ; and yet assert, that no man has a sufficient warrant to rely upon that righteousness alone for justification—as exhibited in the word of the gospel, till he is first conscious of his own godliness and sincerity ; is in effect to affirm, that though sinners in general must be justified freely by grace, through the imputed righteousness ; yet no sinner in particular ought, or has any warrant to believe, that he is, or ever can be justified in that manner, or without a righteousness of his own ; or, at least, something in and about himself, upon which he may with safety bottom an assurance of the divine favour, and his own justification and salvation *.’

Though the Author be fully persuaded, that a denial of the position maintained, is inconsistent with the genuine gospel, and with those principles on which every truly pious man proceeds in his prayers, respecting acceptance with God ; yet he is far from concluding, that no one is a real disciple of Christ, who does not explicitly avow that position. For he has learned, from experience and observation, that persons will sometimes dispute against a particular sentiment, the truth of which is habitually implied in their *prayers*, and its importance

* *Palæmon's Creed Reviewed and Examined*, Vol. I. p. 195, 196. Vol. II. p. 102, 100.

tacitly acknowledged in their *own experience*. To this effect is the following language of Dr. OWEN, respecting certain opposers of the doctrine of justification merely by grace, through an imputed righteousness : ‘ I doubt ‘ they oftentimes dispute themselves beyond what they ‘ can well abide by, when they return home unto a sedate ‘ meditation of the state of things between God and ‘ their own souls—I had rather learn what some men ‘ really judge about their own justification, from their ‘ *prayers*, than their *writings*. Nor do I remember, ‘ that I did ever hear any good man in his prayers, use ‘ any expressions about justification, pardon of sin, and ‘ righteousness before God, wherein any plea, from any ‘ thing in ourselves, was introduced, or made use of— ‘ Whereas we may, and ought, to represent unto God ‘ in our supplications, our faith, or what it is that we ‘ believe herein ; I much question, whether some men ‘ can find in their hearts to *pray* over and plead before ‘ him, all the arguments and distinctions they make use ‘ of to prove the interest of our works and obedience in ‘ our justification before him ; or *enter into judgment* with ‘ him, upon the conclusions which they make from them ‘ —I judge no men upon the expressions that fall from ‘ them in polemical writings ; wherein, on many occa- ‘ sions, they do affront their own *experience*, and contra- ‘ dict their own *prayers*—To believe the doctrine of ‘ [justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ,] ‘ or not to believe it, as thus or thus *explained*, is one

‘ thing ; and to *enjoy* the thing, or *not enjoy* it is another.
‘ I no way doubt, but that many men do receive more
‘ grace from God, than they understand, or will own ;
‘ and have a greater efficacy of it in them, than they
‘ will believe *.’

That no plausible reasons may be advanced, in opposition to his main thesis, the Author does not suppose. But, as the writer just quoted observes ; ‘ It is a known rule, That a truth, well established and confirmed, is not to be questioned, much less relinquished, on every entangling sophism, though it should appear insoluble †.’

Goodman’s Fields,
LONDON, May 17, 1796.

* *Doctrine of Justification*, p. 8, 19, 20, 62, 273, 279. Glasgow Edit. † *Ut supra*, p. 457.

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GLAD TIDINGS

TO

Perishing Sinners,

&c.

INTRODUCTION.

WETHER any holy disposition in the heart of a sinner be previously necessary to warrant his believing in Jesus Christ ? Or, whether, for that purpose, the gospel itself, detached from every consideration of a preparatory sanctifying influence, be completely sufficient ? are questions on which the ministers of religion, and the professors of godliness, are greatly divided. The *former* sentiment is charged, by some, with Arminian legality : the *latter*, by multitudes, with Antinomian licentiousness. That is discarded, as fostering pharisaical pride, as veiling the glory of sovereign grace, and as corrupting the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is detested, as encouraging presumptuous hope, as inimical to true virtue, and as averse to Supreme authority, expressing itself in divine law. So opposite are the views of pro-

fested Christians, relative to this momentous article of our enquiry !

After much thought on the subject, I cannot but conclude, however, *That the genuine gospel is a complete warrant for the most ungodly person to believe in Jesus; and that no degree of holiness is necessary for that purpose.* This position, though treated by great numbers as a licentious principle, and as pregnant with dangerous consequences, I consider as a capital article of revealed truth, and as essential to the genuine gospel. I adopt it, as expressing an important fact, in which the perfection of our Lord's vicarious work, the honour of divine grace, and the peace of distressed consciences, are deeply concerned : to the proof and illustration of which, the following pages are devoted.



To prevent mistakes it is proper to be observed, that, by an *holy disposition* is not meant, a speculative knowledge of religious duty; a conviction of spiritual danger; or a desire of immortal happiness : for these, though they accompany, do none of them come under the notion of an holy disposition. These may all exist, more or less, in the minds, the consciences, and the hearts of sinners, without any principle of true sanctity. But, by an *holy disposition* is intended, a *bias* of the will, a *propensity* of the heart, or a *tendency* of the affections, in favour of divine authority, and of conformity

to the divine image.—By *believing* in Jesus Christ, I do not mean a firm persuasion of his being the promised Messiah, and that the Christian religion is from God, though that persuasion be presupposed; nor a mere assent to any particular proposition, however true, or important; nor yet an assurance of personal interest in Christ, as the only Saviour of sinners: but *relying* upon him as revealed in the doctrine of grace, for pardon, peace, and every spiritual blessing.

Again: The question is not, whether sanctifying influence, and real holiness, be previously necessary to *final felicity*? for that is admitted in its fullest sense. Partly, because *without holiness no one shall see the Lord*; and partly, because without holiness, intellectual happiness is impossible,—Neither is the inquiry, Whether a pious turn of heart be necessary to *communion with God*, in the performance of devotional services? for that communion, on the part of a Christian, is nothing else but the exercise of holy affections toward God, as manifesting himself in Jesus Christ.—Nor, whether an holy tendency in the will be necessary, as an evidence of our *having already believed in Jesus*? for that is cheerfully granted.—Nor, yet, whether a divine influence, attending evangelical truth, be necessary to a sinner's *believing in Christ*? for that is an important article of the Christian faith.—But the question to be discussed, is; *Whether the Gospel itself be a complete warrant for the most*

ungodly person to believe in Jesus, without any holy disposition being necessary for that purpose?

By the term *gospel* I here intend, *the doctrine of salvation by grace, through Jesus Christ*: which doctrine is, in the most emphatical sense, *good news*, or *glad tidings*; agreeable to the natural import of the word *euāγγελιον*, as used by the Evangelists and Apostles. Relative to which particular, I will here introduce a few extracts from Dr. GEORGE CAMPBELL. Thus, that learned Author: ‘ This term, (*τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*) agreeably to its etymology, from *εὖ bene* and *ἀγγέλιον nuncium*, always in classical use, where it occurs but rarely, denotes either *good news*, or the *reward* given to the bearer of goodnews—The Greek verb *ευαγγέλιζω*, when first used by the Evangelists,—conveyed to their countrymen only one and the same idea, which is precisely what the phrase *to bring good tidings* conveys to us. The appropriation of the word to the religious institution called the gospel, is of later date, and has gradually arisen out of the former usage. When etymology and use perfectly coincide, we cannot be too literal in our interpretations; when they differ, which does not seldom happen, the latter is to be followed, and not the former—The first meaning of the word (*εὐαγγέλιον*) then in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, is, as has been observed, *good news*; a signification which, though always implied, is not always what is

chiefly intended : and therefore the word cannot, without a sacrifice of propriety, be uniformly so rendered. The name, from being expressive of an eminent quality in the dispensation introduced by the Messiah, and from being most frequently applied to it, came gradually to serve as a name for the dispensation itself. When it is thus employed, it is in our tongue properly rendered *gospel*—This [literal and primitive] sense ought to be retained in the version, when the word, εὐαγγέλιον is construed with a noun serving to limit or explain its nature ; as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς εἰρήνης, *the good news of peace*; τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας, *the good news of the reign*. It was observed, on the explanation of the word βασιλεία, that the Christian economy was foretold under the denomination of *the reign of God*, and *the reign of Heaven*; and I may add, in the typical language of the Psalms, *the reign of David*—Τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χαριτού Θεοῦ, is *the good news of the favour of God*: τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας υμῶν, *the good news of your salvation*. The words in the common version, *the gospel of your salvation*, are mere words, and convey no meaning to English ears. The word always *may*, and commonly *should*, be rendered *good news*, and not *gospel*,—when it is construed with ἀπυστολή, I proclaim or publish—(The word) ἀποκατέλιπτον, rendered *preach*, is derived from ἀποκατέλιπτον, rendered *preacher*; whence also ἀποκατέλιπτον, rendered *a preaching*. The primitive ἀπόκατελιπτόν signifies properly both *herald* and *common*

‘ *crier*—The verb *κηρυσσειν* is accordingly to *cry, publish,*
 ‘ or *proclaim* authoritatively, or by commission from ano-
 ‘ ther, and the noun *κηρυγμα* is *the thing published or pro-*
 ‘ *claimed*—The verb *κηρυσσω* occurs in the New Testa-
 ‘ ment about five and twenty times, always in nearly the
 ‘ same sense: *I proclaim, prædico, palam annuncio*—This
 ‘ may be called the *primitive* sense of the word; and in
 ‘ this sense it will be found to be oftenest employed in
 ‘ the New Testament—Though announcing publicly
 ‘ the reign of the Messiah, comes always under the deno-
 ‘ mination, *κηρυσσειν*, no moral instructions, or doctrinal
 ‘ explanations, given either by our Lord, or by his Apos-
 ‘ tles, are ever, either in the Gospels, or in the Acts,
 ‘ so denominated—Let it be also observed that, in all
 ‘ the quotations in the Gospels, from the ancient Pro-
 ‘ phets, neither the word *κηρυσσω*, nor any of its conju-
 ‘ gates, is applied to any of them beside Jonah. What
 ‘ is quoted from the rest, is said to have been *spoken*,
 ‘ or *foretold*, or *prophecied*, but never *preached*. Jonah’s
 ‘ prophecy to the Ninevites, on the contrary, is but
 ‘ twice quoted; and it is in both places called *κηρυγμα*,
 ‘ rendered *preaching*, properly *cry*, or *proclamation*—It
 ‘ was a real *proclamation* which God required him to
 ‘ make through the streets of Nineveh*.’

* *The four Gospels*, Vol. I. *Dissertat. V.* Part i. § 1, 8, 10,
 11, 16. Part V. § 2, 7, 8.

The gospel then, is *good news*, or *glad tidings*. It is that most interesting part of sacred Scripture which is, by inspired writers, denominated THE TRUTH—the word of the *kingdom*—the word of God's *grace*—the word of *reconciliation*—the word of *righteousness*—the word of *life*—the word of *salvation*—glad tidings of the *kingdom*, or of the *reign*—glad tidings of *Christ*—glad tidings of the *grace* of God—glad tidings of *peace*—glad tidings of *salvation*—the doctrine of *God our Saviour*—the glorious glad tidings of *Christ*—and the glorious glad tidings of the blessed *God**.—It is also denominated, The word of *faith*—the *faith* once delivered to the saints—the *most holy* *faith*—and the *faith in Christ*†.—The publication of the gospel, by the Apostles, is called, *Preaching*, or proclaiming *Christ*—proclaiming *Christ crucified*—preaching the *cross*—proclaiming *peace*, by *Jesus Christ*—proclaiming *forgiveness of sins*, through *Jesus Christ*—proclaiming the *unsearchable riches* of *Christ*—bringing glad tidings of *peace*—and bringing glad tidings of *good things*‡.—Such is the gospel, and such the preaching of it, as represented by the inspired

* Gal. iii. 1. Matt. xiii. 19. Acts xx. 32. 2 Cor. v. 19. Heb. v. 13. Philip ii. 16. Acts xiii. 26. Matt. iv. 23. Rom. i. 1, 16. Acts xx. 24. Eph. vi. 15. i. 13. 2 Cor. iv. 4. 1 Tim. i. 11. Titus ii. 10.

† Rom. x. 8. Jude 3. 20. Acts xxiv. 24.

‡ Acts viii. 5. 1 Cor. i. 18, 23. Acts x. 36. xiii. 38. Eph. iii. 8. Rom. x. 15.

writers! all which unite in the general notion of joy
FUL NEWS.

Let us now see how an ancient ecclesiastical author describes it. Thus CHRYSOSTOM speaks, as quoted and translated by Mr. HERVEY. ‘The gospel comprehends, a discharge from punishment; a remission of sins; the gift of righteousness; the endowment of sanctification; redemption from every evil; the adoption of sons; the inheritance of heaven; and a most endeared, a conjugal relation to the infinitely majestic Son of God. All these divinely precious privileges preached, presented, vouchsafed, to the foolish, to the disobedient, to enemies *.’—‘The gospel,’ says LUTHER, ‘is the doctrine concerning the incarnate Son of God, who was given to us, without our deserts, for peace and salvation. It is the word of salvation, the word of grace, the word of comfort, and the word of joy†.’

The gospel, then, properly and strictly so called, is the doctrine of *divine grace*. As such, it is contradistinguished to the precepts and prohibitions of divine law, which are the doctrine of *human duty*. But, relative to this distinction, and the contrasted light in which the law and the gospel are placed by it, the following quotation from WITSIUS may not be improper. Thus that

* *Theron and Aspasio*, Vol. III. p. 321. Edit. 5th.

† *Loci Communes*, Clas II. Loc. xiv. p. 69. Londini, 1651.

eminent writer : ‘ The *law*, here, denotes that part of
‘ the divine Word which consists of precepts and pro-
‘ hibitions ; with the promise of a reward to be conferred
‘ on those who obey, and a threatening of punishment
‘ on the disobedient. The *gospel* signifies the doctrine
‘ of grace, and of complete salvation in Jesus Christ,
‘ which elect sinners shall receive by faith. Every pre-
‘ scription, therefore, of virtues and of duties ; all exhor-
‘ tations and dehortations ; all reproofs and threatenings ;
‘ all promises, likewise, of reward to perfect obedience,
‘ belong to the *law*. To the *gospel* pertains every thing
‘ that can minister hope of salvation to sinful man : that
‘ is, the doctrine of the Person, the offices, the states,
‘ the benefits of Jesus Christ ; and all promises to which
‘ are annexed the pardon of sin, and the possession of
‘ grace and of glory, to be obtained by faith in Christ.
‘ This is the most strict notion of each word ; to which,
‘ through the whole of this disputation, regard must be
‘ paid—if we understand the word *gospel* strictly, as it
‘ is the *formula* of the Testament of Grace, which con-
‘ sists of mere promises, or an absolute exhibition of sal-
‘ vation in Christ ; then, properly speaking, it prescribes
‘ nothing as duty ; requires nothing ; commands nothing :
‘ no, not even *believe, trust, hope in the Lord*, and such
‘ like. But it reports, declares, and signifies to us, what
‘ God in Christ promises ; what he will do, and is about
‘ to perform. All prescription of duty belongs to the
‘ *law* ; as, after others, the venerable *Voetius* has

' excellently well proved. This must by all means be held, if, with all the Reformed, we would steadily defend the perfection of the law, as including all virtues, and all the duties of holiness *.'—This distinction between the *law* and the *gospel*, strictly understood, appearing to be both just and important, is regarded in the following pages.

Still further, however, to confirm and illustrate the necessity of keeping this distinction in view, it may be observed ; that the *law* of God originated in his relation to men, as moral agents ; and in his necessary dominion over them, of which it is a natural expression : but the *gospel*, in his royal, supreme prerogative ; it being the result of his mere, sovereign pleasure. The *former* considers them as rational creatures that are bound to obey : the *latter*, as guilty creatures, who deserve to suffer. The precepts of divine *law* are the language of stern authority : the doctrines of the *gospel* are the voice of condescending mercy. In *that*, justice unsheathes the sword, and demands vengeance : in *this*, mercy exhibits pardon, and proclaims peace. Divine *law*, is the awful *ministration of death*†, as the desert of sin : the everlasting *gospel* is the good news of life, as the effect of boundless grace. *That*, by a righteous charge of guilt, and of deserved ruin, *stops the mouth*‡ : *this*, by proclaiming a

* *Animadvers. Iren.* C. xv. §. 1, 9.

† 2 Cor. iii. 7. ‡ Rom. iii. 19.

free pardon, opens the lips in gratitude and praise. God, in the *law*, addresses men agreeably to their personal deserts, their character, and their state : in the *gospel*, according to the riches of his own grace, the diversity of their spiritual wants, and the vicarious work of Jesus Christ. In divine *law*, the Most High exhibits himself, as invested with absolute dominion, as flaming with eternal purity, and as unchangeably abhorrent of moral evil: in the *gospel*, as *condemning sin in the flesh* of his own incarnate Son * ; as *pardonning iniquity*, in its greatly diversified forms ; as *justifying the ungodly* ; as *the just God and the Saviour* †.

Hence it appears, that, in addressing sinners, respecting their immortal concerns, neither the announcing of danger, nor the enforcing of duty, is publishing the *gospel*, properly so called. Because it is admitted by all, who are conversant in these things, that *εὐαγγέλιον*, *gospel*, denotes *glad tidings*. Such is its natural and proper, its delightful and emphatical meaning. It is most commonly employed, in the New Testament, with an immediate reference to the grace of God, and the work of Christ, as they appear in the salvation of sinners. Very seldom is it used by the Apostles, to denote the Christian system *at large*; but, with a few exceptions, in its grand,

* Rom. viii. 3.

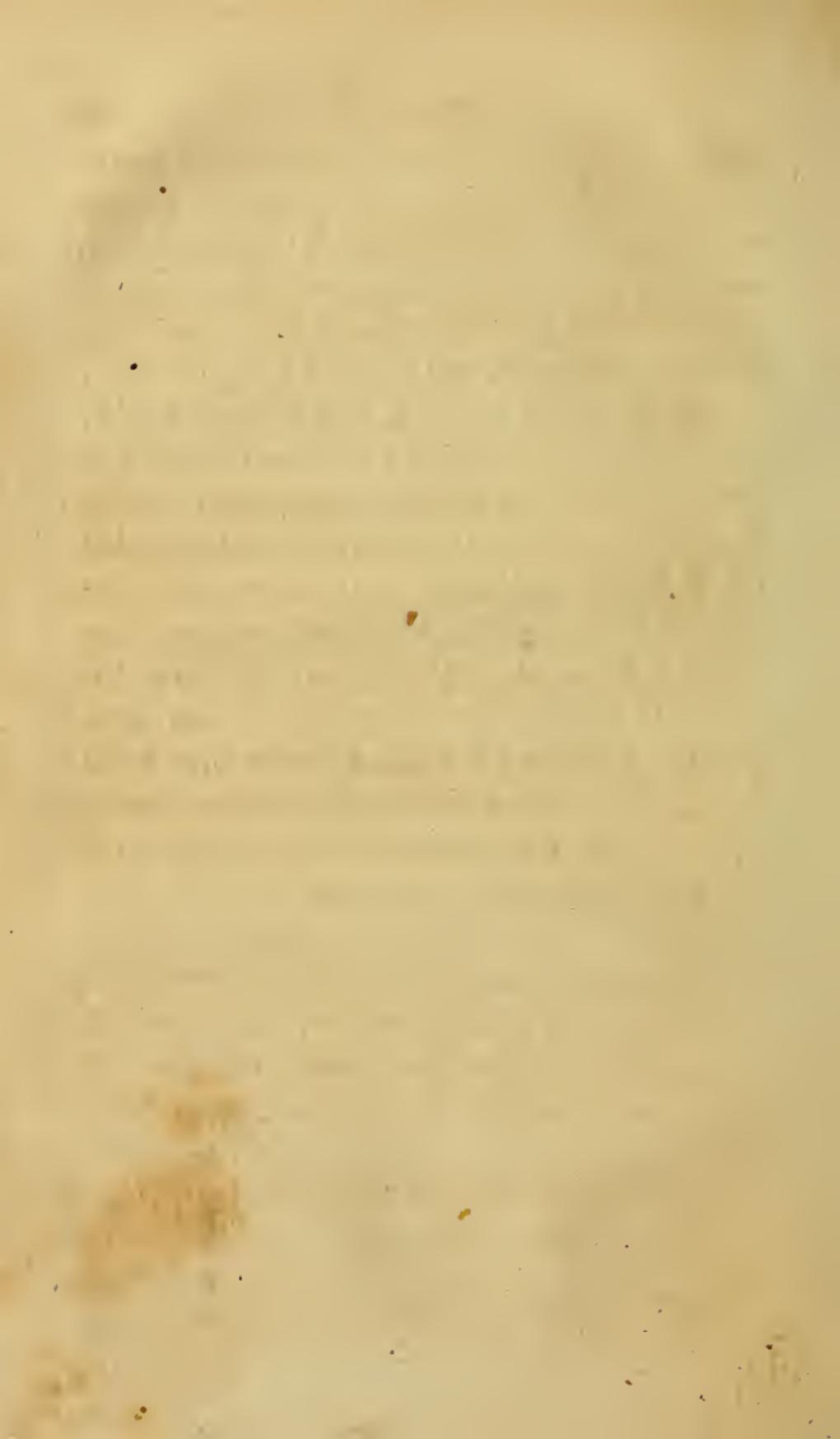
† Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Rom. iv. 5. Isaiah xiv. 21.

appropriate, and emphatical sense, for that part of revealed truth which respects the blessings of salvation, by mere grace, through Jesus Christ. Preaching the *gospel*, therefore, is proclaiming *glad tidings* of salvation for the guilty, the unworthy, and the perishing.

Now, the terms *law*, *precepts*, *commands*, *exhortations*, *threatenings*, and others of a similar kind, are expressions of an extremely different meaning, from that of the word *gospel*. To assert, therefore, the authority of God in his laws, whether moral or positive ; to describe the awful situation of unregenerate sinners ? to warn them of their extreme danger ; to inculcate, for suitable purposes, an impartial regard to all the divine precepts ; and to insist, that an habitual want of obedience to the known commands of Christ, leaves a person destitute of evidence that he either loves him, or believes in him ; though of *essential importance*, in the course of a public ministry, ought never to be considered, strictly speaking, as preaching the *gospel*. It may be all true ; it may be all proper ; it may be all necessary in its place ; and yet, not having the nature of *glad tidings* in it, be very different from the *gospel*.

The word *gospel*, having long been commonly used without any determinate meaning ; except, either a denoting the Christian system, or some doctrine, or precept, pertaining to Christianity ; and having become, by modern use, a kind of technical term in divinity ; is

applied, in the most promiscuous manner, to all sorts of religious doctrine, that are considered by their abettors as warranted in the sacred writings. The public minister, and the private professor, whatever their theological creed may be; are equally pleased with concluding, that the one preaches, and the other hears, the *gospel*: though, frequently, neither of them have any fixed or distinct notion under the term; and even though their views of Christianity render it nearly akin to Deism. It were to be wished, therefore, either that, instead of the old Saxon word *gospel*, the expressions *glad tidings* had been used in our vulgar translation of the New Testament; or that the former term were universally understood in its original sense, as denoting *good news*. For, were that the case, it is highly probable, there would be more knowledge, and less of self-deception; relative to this momentous affair.



CHAPTER I.

THE GENUINE GOSPEL A COMPLETE WARRANT FOR
THE MOST UNGODLY PERSON TO BELIEVE IN
JESUS.

TO prove this position, a great number of passages might be extracted from the sacred Records ; a variety of which, as being more directly to the purpose, and expressing kindred ideas, I will here produce under the following arrangement of particulars.

The condescending and gracious characters which Christ bears. ‘The Mediator between God and men—The ‘Surety of a better testament—A great High Priest—‘The good Shepherd—The Saviour.’*

The great and merciful design of our Lord in becoming incarnate. ‘The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour ‘of the world—The Son of man is come to seek and to ‘save—He shall save his people †.’

The character and state of those whom our Lord came to save. ‘Sinners—the ungodly—enemies to God—the

* 1 Tim. ii. 5. Heb. vii. 22. iv. 14. John x. 11. 2 Tim. i. 10.

† 1 John iv. 14. Luke xix. 10. Matt. i. 21.

‘dead in sin—the children of wrath—the accursed—the lost*.’

The work which Christ performed, the sufferings he underwent, and the benefits to sinners thence resulting.

‘He hath made him to be *sin* for us, who knew no sin ;
 ‘that we might be made the righteousness of God in
 ‘him—He was *wounded* for our transgressions ; he was
 ‘bruised for our iniquities : the *chastisement* of our peace
 ‘was upon him ; and with his *stripes* we are healed.
 ‘All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned
 ‘every one to his own way ; and the *Lord* hath laid on
 ‘him the *iniquity* of us all—Christ our passover is
 ‘sacrificed for us—Christ died for our *sins*—We have
 ‘redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of
 ‘sins—Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the
 ‘law, being made a curse for us—Whom God hath
 ‘set forth to be a *propitiation* through faith in his blood,
 ‘to declare his *righteousness* for the remission of sins that
 ‘are past, through the forbearance of God : to declare,
 ‘I say, at this time, his righteousness ; that he *might be*
 ‘just, and the *justifier* of him which believeth in Jesus—
 ‘When we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God by
 ‘the death of his Son—Christ hath once suffered for *sins*,
 ‘the Just for the unjust, that he *might bring us to God*

* 1 Tim. i. 15. Rom. v. 5, 8, 10. Eph. ii. 1, 3. Gal. iii. 10, 13. Luke xix. 10.

‘—Being now justified by *his blood*, we shall be saved
 ‘from wrath through him—By the *obedience of One* shall
 ‘many be made righteous—Jesus, who, of God, is
 ‘made unto us *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctifica-*
 ‘*tion, and redemption**.’

This testimony of God, respecting the gracious *characters* which Christ bears; the merciful *design* of his appearance in the world; the *state* of those whom he came to save; and the *work* which he performed for that purpose; very strongly encourages the guilty, the ungodly, and the altogether unworthy, to believe in Jesus. For, as it is manifest that he did not assume his condescending and mediatorial characters, come into the world, and expire on a cross, to save the innocent, or the righteous, but *sinners*—the *ungodly*—the *justly accursed*; so individuals of that description must be the *only* persons with whom, as a Saviour from eternal ruin, he has any concern.

The allsufficiency of Christ, of his work, and of divine grace, to save the most ungodly wretch that lives. ‘This
 ‘is his name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR
 ‘RIGHTEOUSNESS—The MIGHTY GOD—Look unto
 ‘Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I

* 2 Cor. v. 21. Isa. liii. 5, 6. 1 Pet. ii. 24. 1 Cor. v. 7; xv.
 3. Col. i. 14. Gal. iii. 13. Rom. iii. 25, 26. v. 10. 1 Pet. iii.
 18. Rom. v. 9, 19. 1 Cor. i. 30.

‘ am God ; and there is none else—Neither is there
‘ salvation in *any other* ; for there is none other name
‘ under heaven given among men whereby we must be
‘ saved—*How much more* shall the blood of Christ, who
‘ through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot
‘ to God, *purge your conscience from dead works* to serve
‘ the living God ?—If through the offence of one many
‘ be dead, *much more* the grace of God, and the gift by
‘ grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath
‘ abounded unto many—The judgment was by *one* to
‘ condemnation ; but the free gift is of *many offences*
‘ unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death
‘ reigned by one ; *much more* they which receive abund-
‘ dance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall
‘ reign in life by one, Jesus Christ—*He is able to save*
‘ *them to the uttermost* that come unto God by him
‘ —The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from
‘ *all sin*—Though your sins be as *scarlet*, they shall
‘ be as white as snow ; though they be red like *crimson*,
‘ they shall be as wool—*All manner* of sin and blasphemy
‘ [*except the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,*] shall
‘ be forgiven unto men—Who is he that condemneth ?
‘ It is *Christ* that died ; yea rather, that is *risen* again,
‘ who is *even at the right hand of God*, who also maketh
‘ *intercession* for us—He entered in once into the holy
‘ place, having obtained *eternal redemption* for us—By
‘ one offering he hath *perfected for ever* them that are

‘ sanctified—Ye are *complete in Him*, which is the Head
‘ of all principality and power*.

Who, now, that maturely considers these infallible attestations to the dignity of our Lord’s Person, the perfection of his obedience, the depth of his penal sufferings, the vicarious nature of his whole work, and the exuberance of divine grace; can doubt the sufficiency, either of Christ or of grace, to save the most vile and miserable of men? Or who, being satisfied of that fact, can forbear to view it as a delightful and powerful encouragement, for the ungodly to believe in Jesus?

Preventing mercy, and the free pardon of enormous offenders. ‘ I was found of them that *sought me not*; I was
‘ made manifest unto them that *asked not after me*—The
‘ Gentiles, which *followed not after righteousness*, have
‘ {*naturalē*} *received righteousness*, even the righteousness
‘ which is of faith—There was a man named
‘ Zaccheus, who was the chief among the publicans,
‘ and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus *who he
‘ was*; and he could not for the press, because he was
‘ little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up
‘ into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that

* Jer. xxiii. 6. Isa. ix. 6. xiv. 22. Acts iv. 12. Heb. ix. 14.
Rom. v. 15, 16, 17. Heb. vii. 25. 1 John i. 7. Isa. i. 18.
Matt. xii. 31. Rom. viii. 34. Heb. ix. 12. x. 14. Col. ii. 10.

' way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked
' up, and saw him, and said unto him, *Zaccheus,*
' make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at
' thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and
' received him joyfully—But thou hast not called upon me,
' O Jacob; but thou hast been *weary* of me, O Israel.
' Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt
' offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy
' sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an
' offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast
' bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast
' thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou
' hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast *wearied*
' me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that *brotteth*
' out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and *will not*
' remember thy sins—For the iniquity of his covetousness
' was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was
' wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his
' heart. I have seen his ways, and *will heal him*: I
' will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to
' his mourners*.'

What a wonderful exhibition is here, of sovereign, free, and all sufficient mercy! It extends to the most carnal and covetous, the most ungrateful and worthless of men. It precedes every good motion of their wills,

* Rom. x. 20. ix. 30. Luke. xix2—6. Isa. xlivi. 22—25. lvii. 17. 18.

and every virtuous affection of their hearts. It waits, neither for any reformation of exterior conduct, nor the least melioration of internal character. It finds them under the power of strong disaffection to God, and with the gain of extortion in their iniquitous hands. Fraught with every spiritual blessing for those who deserve to perish, it pardons their crimson crimes, and softens their obdurate hearts. It gives a new turn to their wills, and elevates their affections to holy objects. It fills them with spiritual comfort, directs their feet into the way of righteousness, and makes them new creatures. Such divinely gracious declarations, and well authenticated facts, must, therefore, warrant the most ungodly person to regard this unparalleled mercy, and to believe in Jesus Christ.

The sovereignty, the riches, and the plenitude of divine goodness, revealed to sinners under the notions of love, of mercy, and of grace. ‘ I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion—Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight—I beseech thee show me thy glory. · ‘ And he said, I wil make all my goodness pass before thee ; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, ‘ and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy— ‘ And Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, ‘ JEHOVAH, JEHOVAH GOD, MERCIFUL AND ‘ GRACIOUS, LONGSUFFERING, ABUNDANT IN GOOD-

NESS AND TRUTH ; KEEPING MERCY FOR THOUSANDS,
FORGIVING INIQUITY, AND TRANSGRESSION, AND
SIN—Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be
gracious unto you , and therefore will he be exalted,
that he may have mercy upon you—God is love.—Behold,
what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us !
—God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten
Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,
but have everlasting life—Herein is love ! not that we
loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to
be the propitiation for our sins—He that spared not his
own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he
not with him also freely give us all things ?—God
COMMENDETH his love toward us, in that, while we
were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us—How excellent
is thy loving kindness, O God ! therefore the children
of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings
—We have redemption through his blood, the forgive-
ness of sins, according to the riches of his grace—God,
who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he
loved us—According to his abundant mercy—They
who receive abundance of grace—Where sin abounded,
grace did much more abound : that as sin hath
reigned unto death, even so might grace REIGN,
through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus
Christ our Lord—The grace of our Lord was EXCEED-
ING ABUNDANT—To the praise of the glory of his

* grace—That, in the ages to come, he might show the
* EXCEEDING RICHES of his grace*.

With what an air of supreme authority, and of absolute dominion, does THE ETERNAL here speak ! He manifestly considers himself as acting quite in character, when exercising, or withholding mercy, according to his own sovereign pleasure. He neither does, nor can, consider himself as a debtor to any man. The whole of our species, being immersed in guilt, and obnoxious to ruin, equally lie at divine mercy, for all their happiness and all their hope.—But, while maintaining the dignity of his character, and the supremacy of his own will, in the bestowment of spiritual blessings on guilty creatures ; he reveals his goodness in the most encouraging manner : which goodness, expressed under the different notions of *love*, of *mercy*, and of *grace*, he represents as an *essential part* of that divine glory which, to the ancient Jewish church, was denoted by the sublimest of all names, JEHOVAH. His *LOVE* is here described and celebrated, as *ardent—excellent—wonderful*: nay, he himself seems to delight in its peerless excellence ; for he not only manifests, but RECOMMENDS it, in the death of his own Son, *to sinners*. His *MERCY*, as *rich—*

* Rom. ix. 15. Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. xxxiv. 6, 7. John iii. 16.
I John iv. 10. Rom. viii. 32. v. 8. Psalm xxxvi. 7. Eph. i. 7.
ii. 4. 1 Pet. i. 3. Rom. v. 17, 20, 21. 1 Tim. i. 14. Eph. i. 6.
ii. 7:

plenteous—abundant. His GRACE as rich—exceedingly rich—abundant—superabundant—exceedingly abundant—and reigning. Surely, then, his love, his mercy, and his grace, being thus revealed in sacred Scripture, and thus commended to sinful, miserable, unworthy creatures; the ungodly must be completely authorised to believe in Jesus. For what are this inference, and the preceding premises, taken together, but saying with David ; *How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God ! THEREFORE the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings ?*

The sparing and pardoning mercy of God, beyond all parallel, and all praise. ‘ My people are bent to backsliding from me : though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? how shall I deliver thee, Israel ? how shall I make thee as Admah ? how shall I set thee as Zeboim ? Mine heart is turned within me ; my repentings are kindled together.* I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger ; I will not return to destroy Ephraim : FOR I AM GOD, AND NOT MAN —Scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet perchance, for a good man some would even dare to die. ‘ *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us—Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and*

' he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he
 ' will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not
 ' your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith
 ' the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the
 ' earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my
 ' thoughts than your thoughts—Who is a God like unto
 ' thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the trans-
 ' gression of the remnant of his heritage ? he retaineth
 ' not his anger for ever, because he DELIGHTETH in
 ' mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion
 ' upon us ; he will subdue our iniquities ; and thou wilt
 ' cast all their sins into the depths of the sea*.'

So numerous are our offences, and so violent our provocations, that, were not the blessed God equally superior to us in goodness, as he is in power ; and in pardoning mercy, as he is in wisdom ; we could not have the least ground of hope. Among men, when a breach of private friendship has taken place, the aggressor, being conscious of the injury which he has done, is commonly very backward to admit, that the aggrieved party has any benevolence for him. Thus it is with sinners, when their consciences are awakened, in regard to God. Extremely backward they are to admit, that there is forgiveness with God, for such aggravated

* Hosea xi. 7, 8, 9. Rom. v. 7, 8. Isa. Iv. 7, 8, 9. Micah vii. 18, 19.

crimes as theirs. To relieve the distressed soul, by obviating this very common and pressing difficulty, the Great Sovereign condescends, in the passages before us, tacitly to admit, that, were he like us, neither pardoning nor sparing mercy would ever be exercised toward any of Adam's offspring. But *he is GOD, and not MAN.* His *thoughts*, relative to pardoning mercy, *are not our thoughts*; nor his *ways*, respecting that important affair, like *our ways*. Offences, comparable to a debt of only *fifty pence*, are often with difficulty forgiven by us; while he, through the blood of *atonement*, freely obliterates a debt of *ten thousand talents*. Among mortals, it is an instance of love extremely rare, that any one should lay down his life, even for a *good man*, or a public *bénéfactor*; but God recommends his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, and his enemies, he sent his own Son to die for us. Far from regulating the manifestations of his compassion, according to the puny instances of human kindness; he not only blesses, but astonishes, by the displays of his matchless favour to sinners.—Yes, *God is LOVE*; and, therefore, he *delighteth in mercy*. What, then, could be more encouraging; or what, by necessary consequence, could more strongly authorise, a guilty, ungodly, perishing wretch, to rely on the Lord Jesus, in whom this boundless mercy is manifested?

On this delightful and important subject, Dr. OWEN expresses himself as follows: ‘This *forgiveness that is with God*, is such as becomes him; such as is suitable to his greatness, goodness, and all other excellencies of his nature; such as that therein he will be known to be God. What he says concerning some of the works of his Providence, *be still, and know that I am God*; may be much more said concerning this great effect of his grace; *Still your souls, and know that he is God*. It is not like that narrow, difficult, halving, and manaked forgiveness that is found among men; when any such thing is found amongst them. But it is full, free, bottomless, boundless, absolute; such as becomes his nature and excellencies. It is, in a word, *forgiveness that is with God*, and by the exercise whereof he will be known so to be—God himself doth really separate and distinguish his forgiveness from any thing that our thoughts and imaginations can reach unto; and that because it is his, and like himself. It is an object for *faith alone*; which can rest in that which it cannot comprehend. It is never safer, than when it is, as it were, overwhelmed with *infinity*— Were not forgiveness in God somewhat beyond what men could imagine, no flesh could be saved. This himself expresseth, Isaiah lv. 7, 8, 9. They are, as is plain in the context, *thoughts of forgiveness, and ways of pardon*, whereof he speaks. These, our apprehensions come short of: we know little, or nothing, of the

‘ infinite largeness of his heart in this matter. He that he
‘ speaks of, is an *impiously wicked man*, and *a man of*
‘ *deceit*, and perverse wickedness. He whose design
‘ and course is nothing but a lie, sin, and iniquity. Such
‘ an one as we would have little or no hopes of; that
‘ we would scarce think it worth our while to deal
‘ withal about a hopeless conversion; or can scarce find
‘ in our hearts *to pray for him*; but are ready to give
‘ him up, as one profligate and déparate. But let him
‘ turn to the Lord, and he shall obtain *forgiveness*.
‘ But how can this be? Is it possible there can be mercy
‘ for such an one? Yes; for the Lord *will multiply to*
‘ *pardon*. He hath forgiveness with him to outdo all
‘ the multiplied sins of any that turn unto him, and seek
‘ for it. But this is very hard, very difficult for us to
‘ apprehend. This is not the way and manner of men:
‘ we deal not thus with profligate offenders against us.
‘ True, saith God: but *your ways are not my ways*. I
‘ do not act in this manner like unto you; nor as you
‘ are accustomed to do—For the most part, when we
‘ come to deal with God about forgiveness, we hang in
‘ every briar of disputing, quarrelsome unbelief. This
‘ or that circumstance, or aggravation; this or that unpa-
‘ ralleled particular, bereaves us of our confidence.
‘ Want of due consideration of Him with whom we
‘ have to do, measuring Him by that line of our own
‘ imaginations, bringing Him down to *our thoughts* and
‘ *our ways*, is the cause of all our disquietments. Be-

cause we find it hard to forgive our *pence*, we think he cannot forgive *talents*. But he hath provided to obviate such thoughts in us, (*Hosea xi. 9.*) *I will not execute the fierceness of my wrath ; I will not return to destroy Ephraim*; FOR I AM GOD, AND NOT MAN. Our satisfaction in this matter, is to be taken from his *nature*. Were He a *man*, or as the sons of men, it were impossible that, upon such and so many provocations, he should turn away from the fierceness of his *anger*. But he is God. This gives an *infinity*, and an inconceivable *boundlessness*, to the forgiveness that is with him ; and exalts it above all our thoughts and ways*.

Thus MR. CHARNOCK, with reference to this particular : ‘ That fear that Adam had, when, frightened at the voice of God, he hid himself among the trees of the garden, hath remained in part with his posterity, when they reflect upon their crimes. We measure the nature of God by the qualities of our own ; and because we are not forward to remit men’s offences against us, we are apt to imagine that God hath not clemency enough to pardon the faults committed against him. Hence it is that persons, deeply humbled under a sense of the curses of the law, are ready to lick up the dust under the feet of Christ, and behold-

* *On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm*, p. 220, 221, 222.

‘ing an absolute necessity of him, are with much ado
‘brought to believe. Though the design of God in
‘setting out Christ for a propitiation be declared to
‘them, the sufficiency of his merit, the acceptation of
‘it by God, the fruits others have found of it, that the
‘design of Christ’s coming was to ease those in that
‘condition; yet they are hardly induced to lay aside those
‘jealousies they have of God—When men are soundly
‘convinced of the nature and evil of sin, they become
‘vile in their own eyes. Their sin galls them; the
‘law terrifies them; the notions of God’s justice are
‘awakened in them, and lie close to them. They are
‘sensible of the degenerateness and rebellion of their
‘nature: they think God cannot but hate them, and
‘they expect from him only the severity of a judge:
‘and when evangelical mercy is declared, it seems incre-
‘dible to them, because it exceeds their nature and dis-
‘positions. The greatness of the mercy proffered makes
‘them stagger: they believe not God to be so merciful,
‘because they cannot be so; (for in all conditions of
‘men, it is natural to limit God according to their own
‘petty dimensions; and not elevate their thoughts to his,
‘but judge of his thoughts by theirs:) and although his
‘mercy is above the mercy of a creature, we are apt
‘to think his nature as incapable of a largeness as our
‘own. Since man has become vain in his imaginations,
‘he is apt to measure divine things according to those
‘principles which are in his own fancy. Hence God

' calls to men, to forsake their thoughts, their disparaging
 ' conceptions of him ; since his *thoughts* were different
 ' from theirs, as much as *the heavens from the earth*.
 ' (Isaiah iv. 7, 8.) He had higher thoughts of good to
 ' them, than either they had for themselves, or could
 ' think God had for them*.'

The promises of the New Covenant are spiritual, and expressed in the absolute, or unconditional form. ' This
 ' is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
 ' after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws
 ' into their mind, and write them in their hearts : and
 ' I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a
 ' people : and they shall not teach every man his neigh-
 ' bour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the
 ' Lord ; for all shall know me, from the least to the
 ' greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteous-
 ' ness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember
 ' no more †. '

This Covenant provides for all its objects those two capital blessings, justification and sanctification : with which glorification is, by divine constitution, inseparably connected‡. Well might the Apostle speak of *the covenants of PROMISE* || : for the language of this foederal

* *Works*, Vol. II. p. 457, 468.

† Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12. Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

‡ Rom. viii. 29, 30. || Eph. ii. 12.

engagement is that of mere grace, and all in the form of absolute promises. *I will, and they shall,* is Jehovah's mode of speaking, on this momentous occasion. All the covenantees, it is here ascertained, shall be rendered both wise and holy, in order to their being happy. But the promised wisdom and holiness, it is very observable, are plainly represented as flowing from that mercy which pardons the guilty. A free, full, and everlasting forgiveness, though the last particular mentioned, is nevertheless introduced in such a manner as evidently shows, that it should be first sought, at the hand of sovereign mercy—sought by sinners, not as already possessing any degree of sanctity, but in order to it. *If I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts—All shall know me—For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* This is perfectly agreeable to that delightful and comprehensive saying; *There is forgiveness with Thee, THAT THOU MAYEST BE FEARED.*—Now, this divine Covenant including the grand principles of evangelical truth; containing all the blessings which perishing sinners want; and exhibiting those blessings in unconditional promises, or as matter of mere grace; it seems not only natural, but necessary to conclude, That the ungodly are completely warranted by this gracious constitution, to believe in Him, who bears the character of its *Mediator and Surety*.*

* Heb. vii. 22, viii. 6.

MR. JAMES HERVEY, after having produced the language of the New Covenant, proceeds thus : ‘ Where are your *conditions* in this draught? Where are any terms required of impotent man? Is it not all *promise*, from the beginning to the end? That repentance, and that faith, for whose conditionality you plead, are they not both comprehended in this heavenly deed? and comprehended under the form of *blessings* vouchsafed, not of *tasks* enjoined? Does the contract run in this manner? *I require and command.* Or in this strain? *I grant and bestow.* The Lord says, *I will put my laws; I will write them.* The work shall not be laid on my creatures, but done by myself. *They shall be my people, and I will remember their sins no more.* What? provided they perform such and such duties. I read no such clause. | I see no such proviso. All is absolutely free; dependent on no performance of ours; but flowing from sovereign, supreme, selfinfluenced goodness *.—Thus DR. OWEN: ‘ The Covenant of God is not suspended on our will, or on any conditions to be performed by us; but has all its virtue and effect, from the authority, the fidelity, and the grace of God himself. For it is an absolute promise of grace; nor is there any condition of the Covenant, which is not contained in the promise itself †.’

* *Eleven Letters to Mr. J. WESLEY*, p. 170, 171. See also, p. 172, 174, 175, 176.

† *Theologoumena*, L. III. C. i. § 6. Brem. Vide WITSII *Oecon. Fæd.* L. III. C. i. § 8—18. *Acta Synod. Dordrech.* Pars III. p. 312.

Gracious proclamations. ‘Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live : and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David— Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts ; she hath mingled her wine ; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens ; she crieth upon the highest places of the city, *Who so is simple, let him turn in hither !* As for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, *Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled*—Jesus stood and cried, saying, *If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink**.

Now the proof of my position becomes more strong, and more evident. For here we have direct, loud, and solemn addresses, to guilty and miserable creatures that are perishing in their sins—addresses, in the form of proclamations, from the *Father of mercies*, and the *God of all grace*, to the *foolish*, the *starving*, and those that

* Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. Prov. ix. 1—5.

have no money; but, like the Prodigal, are feeding on swinish husks, and perishing with hunger. These are the patentees in the heavenly grant: for to them the proclamation is, ‘*Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money: yea, come to my richly furnished table, there gratuitously to feed on royal dainties, which are the provisions of my grace.*’—It is not easy to conceive of any proclamation from the Court of Heaven, that could have been more happily adapted to remove discouragement from a despairing mind; or to obviate doubts, respecting the ungodly being warranted to believe in Jesus Christ.

Kind invitations, winning persuasions, and importunate intreaties: ‘Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth—Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest—The Spirit and the bride say, *Come:* and let him that heareth say, *Come:* and let him that is athirst *come:* and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely—Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind—Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in—We persuade men—We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God DID BESEECH YOU by us; we PRAY you in Christ’s stead, *Be ye reconciled to God.* For he hath made him

' to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be
' made the righteousness of God in him *.'

In these divine testimonies we behold, what the Psalmist calls, *The MARVELLOUS loving kindness of God*†. For here we have, not only the most gracious and reiterated invitations, but the most attractive persuasions, and the most earnest solicitations---of *whom*? Why, of those who are far from a state of sanctity: being *blind* to their spiritual interests; strongly *disaffected* to God; *absolutely incapable* of providing for their own happiness; not being able either to *work*, or *walk*; the most wretched of mankind; and little better than a nuisance to civil society. For *what purposes*? To accept of *rest*, in Christ, for their souls: to be *reconciled to God*: and to be *guests at a royal banquet*.—Yes, here we have, not only the Apostles of Christ, but Christ *himself*; and, in his Ambassadors, even the divine FATHER; inviting, persuading, intreating the polluted, impoverished, perishing wretches, to regard the vicarious work of Jesus, as the only ground of their justification; and the plentiful provisions of divine grace, as containing all they want for their complete happiness. These invitations, therefore, may be justly considered as a direct and perfect warrant, for sinners of every nation, and of every

* Isa. xlv. 22. Matt. xi. 28. Rev. xxii. 17. Luke xiv. 21, 23. 2 Cor. v. 11, 20, 21.

† Psalm xvii. 7. xxxi. 21.

character, who are indulged with the joyful news, to believe in Jesus.

The perfect readiness, and the sacred pleasure, with which the Father of mercies receives returning profligates.
‘ He arose and came to his Father. But when he was ‘ yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had com- ‘ passion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. ‘ And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned ‘ against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more wor- ‘ thy to be called thy son. But the Father said to ‘ his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on ‘ him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his ‘ feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; ‘ and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was ‘ dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. ‘ And they began to be merry *.’

What an admirable description of divine, paternal mercy; and how agreeable to the gracious import of those delightful passages that were last reviewed! The parable which contains this exquisitely tender and charming representation of pardoning mercy and free acceptance, was designed by our Lord to vindicate his own conduct against the objections of scribes and Pharisees; to rebuke the pride of selfrighteous confidence;

* Luke xv. 20—24.

to encourage persons of the most profligate characters to apply for mercy ; and to assure them that, in so doing, they shall not be disappointed. *Disappointed!* no : for, be their transgressions ever so many, or their demerits ever so great, our Lord represents the divine Father, as compassionately meeting each profligate upon his return ; as embracing him, with parental affection ; as passing an act of oblivion upon all his enormous offences ; as investing him with the robe of righteousness ; as adorning him with the beauties of holiness ; and as admitting him into the celestial family : all which is done, without one unbraiding word, and with supreme delight.—The Prodigal came, says MR. HERVEY,
‘ with no recommendation, either of dress, of person, or
‘ of character. None but his nakedness, his misery,
‘ and an acknowledgement of vileness ; which had every
‘ aggravating, not one extenuating circumstance. Yet
‘ he was received—received with indulgence—received
‘ with caresses—and, without staying to provide any
‘ handsome apparel of his own, was clothed with that
‘ best robe, the robe of a Saviour’s righteousness *.’
Such is divine compassion ! Such that *forgiveness which is with God !* and such encouragement is there for the most notorious profligates to believe in Jesus !

*Blessings, requested by saints, and bestowed by the Lord,
for his own sake—for the sake of his goodness, of his mercy,*

* *Theron and Aspasio*, Vol. III. p. 312, 313.

and of his name. For his *own* sake. ‘ I, even I, am
 ‘ he, that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine *own*
 ‘ sake—For mine *own* sake, even for mine *own* sake,
 ‘ will I do it *.’—For the sake of his *goodness*. ‘ Ac-
 ‘ cording to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy
 ‘ *goodness* sake, O Lord† !’—For the sake of his *mercy*.
 ‘ For thy great *mercies*’ sake thou didst not utterly
 ‘ consume them, nor forsake them—Redeem us for thy
 ‘ *mercies*’ sake!—Save me, for thy *mercies*’ sake ‡.’—
 For the sake of his *Name*. ‘ Do not abhor us, for thy
 ‘ *Name*’s sake ; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory !
 ‘ —I had pity, for my holy *Name*—I do not this for
 ‘ your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy *Name*’s
 ‘ sake—For my *Name*’s sake will I defer mine anger,
 ‘ and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut
 ‘ thee not off—I will sanctify my great *Name*,—when I
 ‘ have been sanctified in you—For thy *Name*’s sake, O
 ‘ Lord, pardon my iniquity ; for it is great—Help us,
 ‘ O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy *Name*—
 ‘ Do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy *Name*’s
 ‘ sake—O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us,
 ‘ do thou it for thy *Name*’s sake!—For thy *Name*’s sake,
 ‘ lead me and guide me—He leadeth me in the paths of
 ‘ righteousness, for his *Name*’s sake—Quicken me, O
 ‘ Lord, for thy *Name*’s sake—He saved them for his

* Isa. xlivi. 25. xlvi. 11.

† Psalm xxv. 7.

‡ Neh. ix. 31. Psalm xliv. 26. vi. 4.

‘*Name’s* sake -- The Lord will not forsake his people,
‘for his great *Name’s* sake *.’

It is hence apparent, that God, in the bestowment of blessings on the children of men, is not influenced by the purity of their hearts, the piety of their lives, or the worthiness of their characters; but by a regard to his own eternal perfection; to the supreme excellence of his own revealed Name; and to the everlasting honour of his own immense goodness. No: the blessings of salvation, on whomsoever conferred, are never to be considered as distinguishing worth, and rewarding merit; but as designed to display the riches of divine mercy, and the glory of the divine character, by relieving the wretched, and saving the unworthy.—Now, the Divine Majesty having revealed himself as exercising mercy, and granting spiritual blessings, for his *own sake*; the polluted, ungodly, and perishing sinner is completely warranted to rely on that mercy, as manifested in the atonement, for pardon, acceptance, and peace, independent of every other consideration. This perfectly suits, not only the apostate state of man, but the peerless majesty of God. For as he is possessed of boundless Being; as all creatures received their existence from

* Jer. xiv. 21. Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 22. Isa. xlvi. 9. Ezek. xxxvi. 23. Ps. xxv. 11. lxxix. 9. cix. 21. Jer. xiv. 7. Ps. xxxi. 3. xxiii. 3. cxliii. 11. cvi. 8. 1 Sam. xii. 22. See also Josh. vii. 9. Ezek. xx. 9, 14, 22, 44.

his power, and are entirely dependent on his pleasure; and as the sum total of all created existence is but an atom, in comparison with him; so he acts perfectly agreeable to his own character, in making himself the ultimate end of his whole conduct, and in all things consulting his own glory.

The passages here produced, being all extracted from the Old Testament, are quite suitable to that revelation which God made of himself under the Jewish Economy; and to the import of his name JEHOVAH, by which he made himself known to the chosen tribes. For that Name was, in a peculiar manner, *his own* * : by which he was distinguished, as the only Object of Israel's worship and as their King, from all the Deities and Sovereigns of the ancient Heathens. This most August Name, together with its glorious import, he proclaimed to Moses in the most solemn and commanding manner †: to which Name, and its comprehensive signification, reference is apparently had in many of the texts just adduced. Moses, on a very sorrowful occasion, regarded it, as affording the most powerful plea with God, on the behalf of Israel, when they had greatly offended, and were threatened with extermination ‡. Joshua, too, has recourse to the same sublime Character, in pleading

* Exod. vi. 2, 3. Psalm lxxxiii. 18.

† Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. xxxiv. 5—8. ‡ Numb. xiv. 17—20.

the cause of Israel at his Maker's footstool, when they were under the tokens of divine anger *. The sacred import of this Name was, to the ancient saints, like a *strong tower* †, or an impregnable fortress, for the encouragement and confidence which they derived from it. Really to understand the fruitful signification of it, was always attended with confidence in the God of Israel. For it is written, *They that know thy Name will put their trust in thee* ‡.—Now, if the revealed character of God, under the Old Economy, was pregnant with encouragement for miserable sinners to rely on his mercy for pardon and salvation ; it cannot be supposed that evangelical truth, under the Christian system, is less favourable to the cause of human hope.—Relative to the name JEHOVAH, Dr. OWEN says :
 ‘ To be known by *this Name* ; to be honoured, feared,
 ‘ believed as that declares him, is the *great glory of God*.
 ‘ And shall this fail us ? Can we be deceived trusting in
 ‘ it, or expecting that we shall find him to be what his
 ‘ Name declares ? God forbid || !’

Spiritual blessings absolutely free and irrevocable gifts.
 ‘ Being justified *freely*, by his grace—The grace of God,
 ‘ and the *gift by grace*, which is by one man, Jesus Christ,
 ‘ hath abounded unto many—The *free gift* is of many

* Josh. vii. 5.

† Prov. xviii. 10.

‡ Ps. ix. 10.

|| *On xxxix Psalm*, p. 199.

‘ offences unto justification—They which receive abundance
 ‘ of grace, and of the *gift of righteousness*—By
 ‘ the righteousness of One, the *free gift* came upon all
 ‘ men unto justification of life—The things that are
 ‘ freely given to us of God—Wine and milk, without
 ‘ money, and without price—The *gift of God is eternal*
 ‘ *life*, through Jesus Christ our Lord—He that spared
 ‘ not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how
 ‘ shall he not with him also *freely give us all things*—
 ‘ Thou hast received *gifts* for men; yea, for the *rebellious*
 ‘ *also*—The gifts and calling of God are *without reparation**.
 ‘

How admirably adapted is the Economy of Redemption to our apostate state! Are we miserable? God is merciful. Are we unworthy? God is gracious. Are we, to the last degree, impoverished? God is immensely bountiful. The spiritual blessings which he confers, are *absolutely free gifts*: and gifts, we know, are not purchased, but bestowed: not obtained upon conditions to be performed, but received as matter of mere favour. The blessings of divine grace were not intended to recognise moral worth, but to relieve the indigent; not designed to indicate holy qualities in the receiver, but to display generosity in the giver.—When we reflect on

* Rom. iii. 24. v. 15, 16, 17, 18. 1 Cor. ii. 12. Isa. Iv. 1. Rom. vi. 23. viii. 32. Ps. lxxviii. 18. Rom. xi. 29.

the personal dignity of Christ, as *the Son of God*; on the unchangeable interest he had in his Father's love; and on the Father delivering him up to an execrable death for mere sinners; we cease to wonder that, with Him, he freely bestows all spiritual blessings, without any regard to worthiness in them on whom they are conferred. Because the gift of Christ himself is the *grand* evidence of God's love to sinners; incomparably greater than that of authorising the ungodly to believe in Jesus, or than that of his giving heaven to saints.

Divine love, mercy, and grace, directly opposed to works and worthiness of every kind, and of every degree. ‘Herein
‘is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us—It
‘is not of him that *willetteth*, nor of him that *runneth*, but
‘of God that sheweth *mercy*—Not of *works*, but of him
‘that *calleth*—To him that *worketh* is the reward not
‘reckoned of *grace*, but of *debt*. But to him that *work*
‘*eth not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the *ungodly*,
‘his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David
‘also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom
‘the Lord imputeth righteousness *without works*—
‘Therefore it is of *faith*, that it might be by *grace*; to the
‘end the promise might be sure to all the seed—By
‘*grace* ye are saved, through *faith*; and that not of
‘*yourselves*: it is the gift of God: not of *works*, lest
‘any man should boast—Not by *works of righteousness*
‘which we have done, but according to his *mercy* he

‘ saved us—Who hath saved us, and called us with an
‘ holy calling, *not according to our works*, but according
‘ to his *own promise and grace*, which was given us in
‘ Christ Jesus before the world began—If by *grace*,
‘ then it is no more of *works*: otherwise grace is no more
‘ *grace*: But if it be of *works*, then it is no more *grace*:
otherwise work is no more work *.’

This opposition between divine mercy, and human works; the grace of God, and the worthiness of man; is very observable, and extremely important. For the contrasted view that is here given of these particulars, is far from being an incidental thing. We do not find it, in the Apostolic Writings, once or twice only; and that with reference to articles of comparatively small consequence; but, in many places, in an *argumentative* manner, and relative to blessings of the *highest* moment. The sentiment, therefore, which is conveyed by this contrasted form of expression, is to be considered as a *grand principle* of the apostolic doctrine; and this mode of speaking, as the current language of Inspiration, relative to those capital blessings, election, conversion, pardon, and justification.

Now, respecting the objects of God’s eternal choice, their conversion to Christ, their complete forgiveness, and

* 1 John iv. 10. Rom. ix. 16, 11. iv. 5, 6, 16. Eph. ii. 8,
9. Titus iii. 5. 2 Tim. i. 9. Rom. xi. 6.

their perfect acceptance with the Most Holy; the reasonings of Paul, where this kind of language is used, plainly show, that his design was entirely to exclude, not only all *merit* strictly so called, but all *comparative* worthiness. Yes, he intended to prove, that God, in the bestowment of these blessings, has not the least regard to personal holiness, or moral worth, in the favoured objects of his kindness; but considers them as equally unworthy with those who finally perish. Nay, in the last of these instructive passages the Apostle proves, professedly and in a formal manner, that *grace* and *works*, or divine favour and comparative human worthiness, are so opposite one to another, that it is impossible for them to concur in procuring the same blessings. So that whosoever considers himself as distinguished from others, by virtuous habits or pious performances, and thence derives encouragement to look for acceptance with God through the imputed righteousness of Christ, confounds the most opposite ideas relating to an affair of the highest moment; rejects the determination of Paul; and must be miserably disappointed.—I said, *COMPARATIVE human worthiness*: for that is all which the nature of the case admits. Because *worthiness* of divine blessings, in a strict, legal, absolute sense, and especially as to *apostate* creatures, is impossible. Consequently, the gospel, in which this contrast between grace and works is thus frequently formed, must be considered as authorising the ungodly to believe in Jesus.

Divine fidelity engaged, that none of those who believe in Christ shall be disappointed. ‘Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life—He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life—Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out—I will give him rest—Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die—He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved—Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.’*

That divine fidelity is here pledged, for the everlasting security of all who really believe in Jesus, will not be disputed by those that maturely consider the gracious declarations, and revere the sacred Writings. It is equally clear, that these passages exhibit the Lord Redeemer as free for miserable sinners, of every nation, and of every character, to whom the glad tidings come. For the language is not, *He that is disposed to keep the divine commands—He that has performed conditions—Whoever is comparatively worthy—*and believeth in Christ: but, *He that believeth—Whosoever believeth.* Consequently, this exhibition of Christ, and that assurance of complete salvation to all that believe in him, attest the fact for which I contend.

Acts and precedents of divine mercy, in pardoning the greatest offences, and in saving the vilest of sinners.

* John iii. 15, 16, 36. vi. 37. Matt. xi. 28. John x^r. 25. Mark xvi. 16. Rom. ix. 33.

‘ Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor
‘ effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,
‘ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers,
‘ nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.
‘ *And such (τινα) were some of you:* but ye are
‘ washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in
‘ the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our
‘ God---*We ourselves also were sometime foolish, diso-*
‘ *bedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,*
‘ *living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.*
‘ But *when (οτε)* the kindness and love of God our
‘ Saviour toward man appeared ; not by works of righte-
‘ ousness which we have done, but according to his
‘ mercy he saved us—*Dead in trespasses and sins;*
‘ wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the
‘ course of this world, according to *the prince of the*
‘ *power of the air,* the spirit that now worketh in the
‘ children of disobedience : among whom *we all had*
‘ *our conversation in time past in the lusts of our flesh,*
‘ *fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ; and*
‘ *were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*
‘ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love
‘ wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in
‘ sin, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace
‘ ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and
‘ made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ
‘ Jesus: THAT IN THE AGES TO COME *he might shew*
‘ *the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward*

‘ us through Christ Jesus—I was there a *blasphemer*, and
 ‘ a *persecutor*, and *injurious** : but I obtained mercy,
 ‘ because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace
 ‘ of our Lord was *exceeding abundant* with faith and
 ‘ love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying,
 ‘ and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came
 ‘ into the world to save sinners ; of whom *I am chief*.
 ‘ Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, THAT IN ME
 ‘ THE CHIEF ($\pi\wp\tau\omega$) Jesus Christ might shew forth all
 ‘ long-suffering, FOR A PATTERN TO THEM WHICH
 ‘ SHOULD HEREAFTER BELIEVE IN HIM TO LIFE
 ‘ EVERLASTING †.’

That these instances of saving mercy were entered on divine record, as *acts* and *precedents* of the Court of Heaven ; and, under that very notion, are to be regarded by sinners in all future ages, the texts themselves inform us. Now, as these authenticated facts display the riches of reigning grace, in saving some of the most abominable characters that ever lived ; and as these instances of superabounding, sovereign mercy to profligate, impious wretches, were intended by Jesus Christ as a *pattern* of his own procedure in following times ; they must be considered as warranting the most detestably vile to

* BEZA here exclaims, ‘ Behold, what *preparatory* deserts the Apostle produces !’

† 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. Titus iii. 3, 4, 5. Eph. ii. 1—7.
1 Tim. i. 13—16.

believe in our Almighty Saviour. For it is not easy to conceive of more flagitious characters, than some of those that are here specified. Yet they were encouraged to believe in Jesus. On him they relied, and were not disappointed.—Did but those profligates who, by a course of enormous offences, are sunk into a kind of hardened despair, understand the design of these acts and precedents, they would no longer say, with some in the Prophet, *There is no hope : no ; for we have loved strangers, and after them will we go* *. For the plenitude of that revealed provision which sovereign mercy has made to relieve the chief of sinners, is, as one observes, ‘A firm bottom of comfort against the ‘guilt of the most bloody and crimson sins. Because ‘*free grace* is not tied to any rules : it may do what it ‘pleaseth †,’ consistently with the rights of justice.

Do the inspired writers teach, that awful judgments, inflicted on the rebellious Israelites, were committed to sacred record for *our admonition* ‡, and to guard us against sin ? they also inform us, that the justification of Abraham by faith, and without works, was recorded for our instruction §, respecting that capital blessing of divine grace. Nay, Paul assures us, that *whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning : that*

* Jer. ii. 25.

† Dr. SFURSTOWE’s *Wells of Salvation*, p. 51.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 11.

§ Rom. iv. 23, 24.

*we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, MIGHT HAVE HOPE *.* On this ground, therefore, we may safely conclude, that the numerous particular instances of divine forgiveness, which stand recorded in holy Scripture, were intended to encourage hope in the guilty breast, and to produce reformation in the profligate life. Have we, for example, undoubted reason to conclude, that perfect pardon was graciously granted, to Lot for his *drunkenness* and *incest*—to David, for his *adultery* and *murder*—to Manasseh, for his *outrageous* and *monstrous* wickedness—to publicans and prostitutes, for their *extortion* and *impurity*—to Peter, for *denying* his Lord with *imprecations* and *perjury*—to a crucified robber and ruffian, for his *obduracy* and *blasphemy*, of which he was guilty but a little before he expired on a gibbet—to any of the Jews, for the unparalleled crime of *crucifying* Messiah, the Son of God—to Saul of Tarsus, for *blaspheming* Christ and *murdering* the saints—and to the Philippian Jailor, for his *persecution* and intentional *selfmurder* †?—all these facts proclaim in our ears, **THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD, THAT HE MAY BE FEARED!** Their language, to the most impious and

* Rom. xv. 4.

† Gen. xix. 31—38 2 Sam. xii. 2 Chron. xxxiii. Matt. xxi. 31. 32. Luke vii. 29, 32—50. Matt. xxvii. 74. Mark xiv. 71. Matt. xxvii. 44. Mark xv. 32. Luke xxiii. 39—43. xxiii. 34. xxiv. 47. Acts ii. 41. iv. 4. Acts ix. 1. xxii. 4. xxvi. 10, 11. xvi. 27—34.

abandoned, is, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will ABUNDANTLY PARDON.*—I will conclude this particular in the following words of Dr. OWEN :
‘ I may safely say, that there is no *sin*, no *degree of sin*,
‘ no *aggravating circumstance* of sin, no kind of *continu-*
‘ *ance in sin*, (the only sin excepted) but that there are
‘ those in heaven who have been guilty of them *.’

The riches of pardoning mercy, and the benefits of saving grace, are the joy, the glory, and the song, of believers on earth, and of the beatified in heaven. ‘ Bless the Lord,
‘ O my soul, and forget not all his benefits ! Who for-
‘ giveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases
‘ —I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions,
‘ and as a cloud thy sins : return unto me ; for I have
‘ redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord
‘ hath done it : shout, ye lower parts of the earth, :
‘ break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and
‘ every tree therein : for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob,
‘ and glorified himself in Israel—I will greatly rejoice in
‘ the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God. For he
‘ hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he
‘ hath covered me with the robe of righteousness—Who
‘ is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and

* On the cxxx Psalm, p. 147.

‘ passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heri-
 ‘ tage !—God forbid that I should *glory*, save in the
 ‘ cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—We *joy* in God,
 ‘ through our Lord Jesus Christ—*Rejoice* in the Lord
 ‘ alway : and again I say, *Rejoice*—Of Him are ye in
 ‘ Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom,
 ‘ and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption :
 ‘ that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, *let*
 ‘ *him glory in the Lord*—*Blessed* be the God and Father
 ‘ of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his *abun-*
 ‘ *dant mercy* hath begotten us again to a lively hope—
 ‘ *They sung a new song*, saying, Thou art worthy to take
 ‘ the book, and to open the seals thereof : for thou wast
 ‘ slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out
 ‘ of every kindred, and people, and tongue—*Joy shall*
 ‘ *be in heaven* over one sinner that repented—*There is*
 ‘ *joy in the presence of the angels of God* over one sinner
 ‘ that repented *.’

That the grant of complete pardon, and the enjoyment of spiritual peace ; the hope of everlasting happiness, and the eternal fruition of heaven ; should excite joy, and produce praise, there is no reason to wonder : especially, when the blessedness included in these incom-

* Psalm ciii. 2, 3. Isa. xliv. 22, 23. Ixi. 10. Micah vii. 18.
 Gal. vi. 14. Rom. v. 11. Philip. iv. 4. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. 1
 Pet. i. 3. Rev. v. 9. Luke xv. 7, 10.

parable benefits is considered as the fruit of mere sovereign favour, through the blood of Jesus Christ ; which is manifestly the case here. But, in proportion as the forgiveness of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons, are considered as depending on conditions performed, or on qualifications obtained, by us ; there is reason of joy in our own exertions and worthiness * : which is diametrically contrary to the apostolic doctrine of salvation by grace †. For the language of every real believer is, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake* ‡. The gratitude, therefore, the joy, and the exultation of scriptural saints, for spiritual blessings, infer the point for which I am pleading.

The eternal design of God, in the work of salvation by Jesus Christ, was to manifest, exalt, and for ever to glorify his own grace, in rendering the unworthy everlastinglly happy. ‘ For my Name’s sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off—Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy Name—Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, TO THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE—In whom

* Rom. iv. 9; † Rom. iii. 27. 1 Cor. iv. 7. Eph. ii. 5—9.

‡ Psalm cxv. 1.

‘also we have obtained an inheritance—that we should
‘be to the praise of his glory—Ye were sealed with that
‘Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our
‘inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased
‘possession, unto the praise of his glory *? ’

As, in that most wonderful of all works, REDEMPTION, the design of God was to manifest, illustrate, glorify, his own grace ; as the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ reveal that grace, in connection with its design ; and as no doctrine deserves the name of *gospel*, which does not exhibit the grace of God, as abounding, reigning, glorious—worthy of everlasting admiration and praise ; the genuine gospel must be considered as encouraging, inviting, warranting, the most ungodly to believe in Jesus. For divine grace, in election, redemption, regeneration, and justification, has no concern with any besides the absolutely unworthy. To this its very nature, and the design of God in dispensing the blessings proceeding from it, are completely adapted. *Its very nature.* For it is not merely *grace*, though as such it must be sovereign ; but it is grace with a GLORY around it—*The GLORY of his grace*, is the language of Paul. Now, an essential part of its most shining, illustrious, glorious qualities must consist, in its being *absolutely free*, and *infinitely rich*. The former, as to its objects ; the

* Isa. xlvi. 9. Psalm lxxix. 9. Eph. i. 5, 6, 11—14.

latter, as to its *benefits* : and both, as providing for the altogether vile. *The design of God in dispensing the blessings proceeding from it.* This was, we are here expressly informed, not, *ultimately*, our happiness, though that be a great design ; much less the rewarding of human worth ; but *his own PRAISE—the praise of his own GLORY—and the praise of the glory of his GRACE.*

‘ If there be any pardon with God,’ says Dr. OWEN, ‘ it is such as becomes him to give. When he pardons, ‘ he will abundantly pardon. Go with your *half-forgiveness*, limited, conditional pardons, with reserves and ‘ limitations unto the sons of men : it may be, it may ‘ become them ; it is like themselves. That of God is ‘ absolute and perfect ; before which our sins are as a ‘ cloud before the East wind, and the rising sun. ‘ Hence he is said to do this work, with his *whole heart* ‘ and with his *whole soul*—This forgiveness is in or with ‘ God, not only so as that we may apply ourselves unto ‘ it, if we will, for which he will not be offended with ‘ us ; but so, also, as that he hath placed his *great glory* ‘ in the declaration and communication of it : nor can ‘ we honour him more, than by coming to him to be ‘ made partakers of it, and so to receive it from him. ‘ For the most part, we are, as it were, ready, rather ‘ to *steal* forgiveness from God, than to receive from ‘ him, as one that gives it freely and largely. We ‘ take it up, and lay it down, as though we would be

‘ glad to have it, so God did not, as it were, *see us take*
‘ it : for we are afraid he is not *willing* we should have
‘ it indeed. We would steal this fire from heaven, and
‘ have a share in God’s treasures and riches, almost
‘ without his consent. At least, we think we have it
‘ from him *agre*, with much difficulty ; that it is rarely
‘ given, and scarcely obtained. That he gives it out
‘ with a kind of *unwilling willingness* ; as we sometimes
‘ give alms without cheerfulness : and that he looseth so
‘ much by us, as he giveth out in pardon. We are apt
‘ to think, that *we are very willing* to have forgiveness ;
‘ but that *God is unwilling* to bestow it ; and that,
‘ because he seems to be a looser by it, and to forego
‘ the *glory of inflicting punishment* for our sins ; which, of
‘ all things, we suppose, he is most loth to part withal.
‘ And this is the very nature of *unbelief*. But, indeed,
‘ things are quite otherwise. He hath, in this matter,
‘ through the Lord Christ, ordered all things, in his
‘ dealings with sinners, *to the praise of the glory of his*
‘ *grace*. His design, in the whole mystery of the gof-
‘ pel, is to make his *grace glorious*, or to *exalt* pardoning
‘ mercy. The great fruit and product of his grace is
‘ *forgiveness* ; the *forgiveness* of sinners. This God
‘ will render himself *glorious* in, and by. All the *praise*,
‘ *glory*, and *worship*, that he designs from any in this
‘ world, is to redound unto him by the way of this grace,
‘ as we have proved at large before*.’

* *On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm*, p. 225, 226.

God condescends to represent himself as taking sublime delight, in the exercise of pardoning mercy, in bestowing the blessings of grace, and in making his people completely happy.

' He delighteth in mercy—Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul—It [the bestowment of spiritual blessings] shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off—As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee—I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people—I will cleanse them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me ; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour, before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them—The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty : he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy : he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing—The Father said to his servants, Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry—It was meet that we should make

‘merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found*.’

Is the Father of mercies represented as having engaged, by two immutable things, for the final security of his people, in order that they who flee for refuge to the hope set before us might have strong consolation†? it is in allusion to the most solemn assurances which men can give of their fidelity one to another. So here, in condescension to the weakness of our capacities, and in allusion to our modes of expressing the most lively sensations of joy, he exhibits himself as possessing human affections, and speaks as if his own unchangeable felicity were increased, by liberally dispensing spiritual blessings, and by rendering the wretched completely happy. This, as observed under a former particular, is expressive of *marvellous living kindness*; and most strongly adapted to show, that the needy, the ungodly, the perishing sinner, has no reason to suspect the glorious God of reluctance to bestow the blessings of grace. No: he gives with a liberal heart, and a bountiful hand. To pardon freely; graciously to confer spiritual benefits; and, if I may so speak, to do it with *divine delight*; are a conduct worthy of his character, as denominated LOVE; and for the honour of our Lord’s mediation. Because *love delights*

* Micah vii. 18. Jer. xxxii. 41. Isa. lv. 13. lxii. 5. lxv. 19.
Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9. Zeph. iii. 17. Luke xv. 22, 23, 24, 32.

† Heb. vi. 13—18.

in the happiness of its objects ; and Christ is glorified in the salvation of those who are justly condemned. Surely then, the genuine gospel must warrant the ungodly to believe in Jesus, by whom the character, the counsels, and the perfections of God, are made known to sinners.

As the preceding, with similar particulars, constitute that comprehensive and gracious message which is called THE GOSPEL ; we must now consider, To whom, by divine command, these glad tidings were sent—The state and character of those to whom the Apostles proclaimed the joyful news—And their immediate design in making the gracious proclamation.

*To whom, by divine command, these glad tidings were sent. ‘ Go ye, and teach all nations—Go ye into all the world, and proclaim the glad tidings to every creature —Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day : and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem *.’*

After our Lord's resurrection from the dead, his commission to the Apostles, for preaching the gospel, was extensive as the human species. *The middle wall of partition, between Jews and Gentiles, being demolished,*

* Matt. xxviii. 18. Mark xvi. 15. Luke xxiv. 47.

those first ministers of Christ were not only permitted, but required, as Providence gave opportunity, to proclaim the glad tidings wherever they came, without any exception of nation, of rank, or of character. Yes, the prerogatives connected with carnal descent from Abraham, the Covenant made at Sinai, and the Mosaic Economy, being all abolished ; those Ambassadors of Heaven were commanded to publish pardon, and proclaim peace, through Jesus Christ, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The state and character of those to whom the Apostles proclaimed the joyful news. ‘ When they knew God, ‘ they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful ; ‘ but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish ‘ heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, ‘ they became fools ; and changed the glory of the ‘ incorruptible God, into an image made like to corrup- ‘ tible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and ‘ creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up ‘ to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, ‘ to dishonour their own bodies between themselves : ‘ who changed the truth of God into a lie, and wor- ‘ shipped and served the creature more than the Creator, ‘ who is blessed for ever. Amen—And even as they ‘ did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God ‘ gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things ‘ which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighte-

'ousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousnes, malici-
'ousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malig-
'nity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful,
'proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to
'parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers,
'without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful :
'who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which
'do such things are worthy of death, not only do the
'same, but have pleasure in them that do them—We
'have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they
'are all under sin. As it is written, There is none
'righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth,
'there is none that seeketh after God. They are all
'gone out of the way, they are together become unpro-
'fitable ; there is none that doeth good, no not one.
'Their throat is an open sepulchre ; with their tongues
'they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under
'their lips : Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitter-
'ness ; their feet are swift to shed blood : destruction
'and misery are in their ways ; and the way of peace
'they have not known : there is no fear of God before
'their eyes *.

What a melancholy moral portrait is this ! How strong the colouring, and how dark the shades ! Jews and Gentiles, without difference, are here described,

* Rom. i. 21—32. iii. 9—18.

as bearing characters the most detestable ; and as being in a state the most awful. Yet this description comes from the hand of one, whose heart was fraught with benevolence to his own species, especially to his countrymen ; and from a pencil which could not give an exaggerated representation. Of such characters, in the estimate of Heaven, did the nations consist, when the Apostles, as ministers of divine truth, received their high commission. Yes, to a world thus desperately degenerate, and thus lying in wickedness, were those Ambassadors of Christ sent with tidings of salvation. To this abominably wicked world they exhibited the crucified Jesus ; preaching pardon, and announcing peace, through his atoning blood. For, if pardon be not published, if peace be not proclaimed in the name of Jesus, the gospel, strictly speaking, is not preached. As, therefore, it is hard to conceive of characters more hateful, of persons more criminal, or of a state more awful, (except in the case of judicial blindness, or of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit;) than those here described ; the ministers of Christ, if they would act agreeably to our Lord's commission, and to the apostolic pattern, must proclaim glad tidings to the vilest of men.

Their immediate design in making the gracious proclamation to such impious and profligate characters. ‘ Preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall

' be damned.—Many other signs truly did Jesus in the
' presence of his disciples, which are not written in this
' book : but these are written, *that ye might believe* that
' Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that *believing*
' ye might have life through his name—The revelation
' of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world
' began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures
' of the Prophets, according to the commandment of
' the everlasting God, made known to all nations *for*
' *the obedience of faith*—That the Gentiles by my mouth
' should hear the word of the gospel and *believe*—Our
' testimony among you was *believed*—Many of them that
' heard the word *believed*—So we preach, and so ye
' *believed**.

Here we have the position to be confirmed, in very nearly the express language of inspiration. For the Apostles were commanded to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. Christ, his work, and the grace revealed by him, constitute the substance of those glad tidings, which were to be published in all nations, and to every creature. The nations were in the most deplorable state of ignorance, of depravity, and of wickedness. To them, however, the joyful proclamation was made, that it

* Mark xvi. 15, 16. John xx. 31. Rom. xvi. 25, 26. Acts xv. 7. 2 Thess. i. 10. Acts iv. 4. 1 Cor. xv. 11. See also Acts xviii. 8. Rom. i. 15, 16. x. 16. Luke xxiv. 25. Acts viii. 12. 1 Cor. iii. 5. Heb. iv. 2.

might be credited by individuals, without exception ; and it was by the divinely gracious *report* * that *faith came*. But the facts revealed in that report could not be really believed, without relying on Jesus Christ as the only and allsufficient Saviour. Consequently, *the genuine gospel is a complete warrant for the most ungodly to believe in Jesus.*

Let us epitomise the preceding particulars, and bring them into one view. Here, then, we have, The condescending characters which our Lord bears—His design, in coming into the world : which was to save sinners, even the most wretched and worthless—The work which Christ performed, the sufferings he underwent, and the benefits to sinners thence resulting—The allsufficiency of his work, to save the most guilty and vile—Preventing mercy, and the free pardon of enormous offenders—The sovereignty, the riches, and the plenitude of divine grace—The sparing and pardoning mercy of God, beyond all parallel and all praise—The promises of the New Covenant unconditional—The most gracious proclamations to those who are starving—The kindest invitations, the most winning persuasions, and the most pressing intreaties, of those that are perishing, to regard the provision which grace has made for the utterly destitute—The perfect readiness, and the sacred pleasure, with which the Father of mercies

* Rom. x. 17.

receives returning profligates—Blessings requested by saints, and bestowed by the Lord, for his own sake—for the sake of his goodness, of his mercy, and of his Name—Spiritual blessings absolutely free and irrevocable gifts—Divine love, mercy, and grace, directly opposed to works and worthiness of every kind, and of every degree—Divine fidelity engaged, that none of those who believe in Christ shall be disappointed—Acts and precedents of divine mercy, in pardoning the greatest offences, and in saving the vilest of sinners—The riches of pardoning mercy, and the benefits of saving grace, are the joy, the glory, and the song, of believers on earth, and of the blessed in heaven—The eternal design of God, in the work of salvation by Jesus Christ, was to manifest, exalt, and for ever to glorify his own grace, in rendering the unworthy everlasting happy—God condescends to represent himself as taking sublime delight, in the exercise of pardoning mercy, in bestowing the blessings of grace, and in exalting his people to complete felicity—These wonderful facts, and gracious truths, with others of a similar kind, constitute that gospel which the Apostles, in pursuance of divine command, proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles--The nations were then extremely impious, profligate, and wicked--And, finally, the gracious proclamation was made to the wicked world that it might be credited, by sinners of every character, in all nations ; and that, believing in

Jesus Christ, they might receive pardon, enjoy peace, perform obedience, and have everlasting life.

By this abstract of evangelical truth it must, I think, appear, to every intelligent and impartial reader, that if the testimony of God to an apostate, guilty, and wretched world, concerning his incarnate Son, and relative to the riches of his own grace, be not a sufficient warrant for the most ungodly person upon earth to believe in Jesus ; it is not easy to conceive of any divine declarations which could have been made, that would have authorised any of those whom the Scriptures call *sinners*, or the guilty in a *perishing condition*, to believe in Christ.

Leaving my reader to consider the foregoing paragraphs in their connection one with another, I shall only add ; If the gospel be not a complete warrant for the most ungodly to believe in Jesus, it must be either because the grace revealed in it is *not equal to their wants* ; or because they are *tacitly forbidden*, while destitute of holiness, to treat him as the Saviour. Not the former : for the grace revealed is *rich, abundant, exceedingly abundant, and allsufficient*. Not the latter ; for the ungodly, as we have already seen, so far from being prohibited, are *invited to Christ, and earnestly intreated*, by a consideration of his vicarious death, to be

reconciled to God *.—If the gospel did not warrant the ungodly to believe in Jesus, it could not have answered its *name*—it could not have been *glad tidings*, to a world so extremely degenerate, corrupt, and criminal, as all the nations were, when the Apostles received their divine commission to proclaim salvation to Jews and Gentiles, without exception, through Jesus Christ.—If the gospel do not authorise the most ungodly to believe in Jesus, it seems impossible for them to credit the gracious report under its *natural* and *proper* character: it being denominated THE GLAD TIDINGS, because it reveals a Saviour for sinners that are in a PERISHING state. But, of all the sinners on earth, those only are in a PERISHING state, who are entirely destitute of true godliness; for the word of Infallibility frequently represents the godly, as in a *state of salvation* †. Nor is the gospel itself really believed, any further than the Saviour exhibited by it is the object of our dependance.

* Isa. xlvi. 22. lv. 1. Matt. xi. 28. 2 Cor. v. 20.

† Matt. v. 3, 4, 8. John v. 24. vi. 40, 54. x. 27, 28, 29. Rom. xiii. 11. Eph. ii. 5, 8. Philip. i. 6.

CHAPTER II.

NO DEGREE OF HOLINESS PREVIOUSLY NECESSARY,
TO WARRANT OUR BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST.

WHEN a sinner is burdened with guilt, and filled with apprehensions of eternal ruin, his language is, ‘*What shall I do to be saved?* or, *How shall I escape the wrath to come?*’ Being ignorant of that righteousness which the gospel reveals for the justification of the ungodly, he labours to obtain acceptance with God by his own efforts: till, being better acquainted with the purity of the law, the holiness of God, and the corruption of his own heart, he despairs of being justified by the works of the law.

To a person thus convinced of sin, and apprehensive of danger, one should suppose the glad tidings of sovereign grace, and the doctrine of complete salvation by Jesus Christ for the chief of sinners, would be embraced with all possible readiness. Experience and observation prove, however, that awakened sinners are frequently backward to receive encouragement from the glorious gospel. This arises, not from any defect in the grace it proclaims, or in the salvation it brings; not because

the alarmed sinner is under any necessity, or in any distress, for which it does not reveal complete relief; but because he does not behold the glory of that grace which reigns triumphantly in it, and the design of God in making the rich provision. He wants to find himself some way *distinguished* from others, as a proper object of mercy, by holy tempers and sanctified affections. This is his grand embarrassment. In other words he considers himself as not sufficiently *humbled*, under a sense of sin; as not having a suitable *abhorrence* of it; and as not possessing those *fervent breathings* after holiness, which, as he supposes, are necessary before he can be warranted to believe in Jesus, with a well grounded hope of success *—Thus the sinner, though oppressed with guilt, and earnestly desirous of salvation, opposes the designs of divine grace, by ardently seeking for holy qualifications, and personal worthiness, as prerequisite to faith in Jesus Christ! But, that no degree of holiness is previously necessary, to warrant our believing in the Lord Redeemer, I shall in the following paragraphs endeavour to prove.

Under what consideration, then, is any degree of holiness in the heart of a sinner necessary, before he believe in Jesus? As constituting *part* of his justifying righteousness? This cannot be, without admitting, that

* See my *Reign of Grace*, Chap. iv. p. 84, 85. Edit. 4th.

acceptance with God is, in some degree, by our own righteousness.—As the *stipulated condition* of acceptance with Christ? If so, a sinner, on performing that condition, may claim Christ, and all spiritual blessings in him, as matter of *pactitional debt*. ‘For, as Dr. OWEN says, ‘where one thing is the condition of another, that other thing must follow the fulfilling of that condition: otherwise the condition of it, it is not *.’ Yes, whether the condition prescribed be greater or less, the punctual performance of it must give a legal title to all the blessings annexed to that condition: which, in the case before us, would be to obtain justification by the works of the law.—As the qualification for obtaining an *interest in Christ*, or a participation of his benefits? But, necessary as a pious turn of heart is, to evince that we *are* partakers of Christ; it is not either an holy disposition, or faith itself, by which we *obtain* an interest in the blessings of our Lord’s mediatorial work. No; that exalted privilege is not *obtained* by us, but *freely granted* of God, in the decree of election †. For the substitution of Christ, and the whole of his vicarious work, very strongly imply, that all the elect were interested in him *before* they possessed either faith, or holiness. Nay, genuine faith, and real sanctity, ought ever to be considered, not as *the cause*,

* *Doctrine of Justification*, Chap. I. p. 124. Glasgow, 1760.

† John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 24. Eph. i. 3—7.

but as the *fruits* and *evidences*, of that interest. *Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep—He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love* *. Besides, were any degree of holiness the requisite qualification for an interest in Christ, it must be equally so respecting justification by him : which, again, brings us us to the works of the law, as being remotely the procuring cause of our justification before God.—As a *stimulus*, urging an application to Jesus Christ ? But, friendly as every holy disposition in the heart of a converted sinner is, to communion with Christ, and to general happiness ; no principal of sanctity can, with propriety, be considered as a requisite motive to our first believing in him. Because holiness, in the whole of its nature, is as manifestly spiritual health, as depravity and guilt are moral disease † : and every sinner, in his first believing on Christ, regards him as the great Physician—as the *Lord that healeth* ‡. But is it usual for either health, or the commencement of it, rather than disease, and the danger attending, to excite an ardent desire after a skilful and compassionate physician? —As characterising the only persons to whom, by divine authority, the gospel can be addressed? Then the Apostles must be considered as having preached salvation

* John x. 26. Eph. i. 4.

† Ps. ciii. 3. Isa. liii. 5. Ps. vi. 24. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Hosea xiv. 4.

‡ Mat. ix. 12. Mark ii. 17. Luke v. 31. Exod. xv. 26.

in the name of Jesus, to the *church* only ; not at all to the *world* : whereas their commission was, 'as we have already seen, *Proclaim the glad tidings to EVERY CREATURE.*'—As necessary to preserve the sinner, after he believes in Jesus, from *abusing* revealed mercy ? But, as I perceive no scriptural evidence of any one really believing in Christ, and yet, in the general course of his conduct, *abusing divine mercy* ; so we have the most express, infallible information, that *the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth to deny ungodliness* ; that *faith in Jesus works by love to God and man* ; that *faith without works is dead*, and no better than that of devils.—But let us examine the subject more at large.

Every holy disposition is, to a certain degree, *true holiness*. On supposition, therefore, that it be necessary for a sinner to possess any measure of real sanctity, in order to warrant his reliance on Christ ; it may be justly demanded, What mortal shall determine the requisite *quantum* ? Or who shall say, *Thus much is necessary, and no more* ? Nor, consistently with the doctrine of justification entirely by an imputed righteousness, and merely in a way of grace, is it easy to say, as appears by the preceding induction of particulars, for what purpose it can be necessary.

An holy disposition, in any case, or in the least degree, is a disposition to *universal and perfect holiness*.

For as there cannot be the least holiness, where there is no sincere affection for God ; so, all holiness radically consists in love to him, as revealed in Jesus Christ. Consequently, if the contrary of our position be true, no sinner can warrantably believe in Jesus, until he be cordially disposed to perform all the divine precepts, and have the root of perfect holiness in him. But, were any minister of the word, when speaking of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners, expressly to say ; ‘ You, and you *only*, who are heartily disposed perfectly to keep the law, are warranted to believe in Christ ;’ it would, I presume, be esteemed a strange kind of gospel, and little short of an insult on the distressed conscience.

As we cannot conceive of holiness existing in any creature, that is entirely destitute of love to God ; nor of God being loved by any creature, that does not know him ; so, neither will the Scriptures permit us to conclude, that any of Adam’s degenerate offspring ever knew and loved the true God, *except as revealed in the Mediator.* Nor will the Bible warrant our supposing, that sinners ever love the Supreme ; or that they cordially approve the true character of God ; before they believe in Christ, as exhibited in the gospel. *There is forgiveness with Thee, that thou mayest be feared—We love Him, because He first loved us.* For though he deserve the profoundest reverence, and the warmest

affection, for what he is in himself ; it is as manifesting his glory in Jesus Christ, that we either sincerely love, or truly revere him.

If, by an awakened sinner, it be admitted as a fact, and believed as a doctrine, that no one is authorised to depend on Christ for pardon and peace, until possessed of an holy disposition ; he must necessarily be more solicitous to find evidence of that important requisite existing in his heart, than to understand and believe what the gospel says concerning Christ. For such a persuasion must unavoidably direct his attention to the virtuous inclinations he desires to feel, and the righteous works he wishes to perform ; rather than to the riches of revealed mercy, and to the allsufficiency of the Redeemer's work. This mode of proceeding must, therefore, while it fosters his legal pride, embarrass his pained conscience : which effects are equally foreign from the genius of evangelical doctrine, and from the nature of true faith.

Our Lord, not being the Saviour of man, as *man* ; or of man, as *holy* ; but of man, as *depraved, guilty, and condemned* ; it apparently follows, from the nature of the case, that if Christ, under his graciously saving character, ever be regarded at all, in a way of dependence ; the sinner must, in his first application to him, consider himself as totally base and worthless. But,

did he possess the least degree of true sanctity, that would be a false estimate of his own character. For holiness is no other than intellectual *beauty*, moral *worth*, and spiritual *excellence*. It is that by which angels are principally distinguished from devils: and, consequently, any degree of it must constitute a most important difference, in state and character, between them that possess it, and those who are entirely unholy.

According to the sentiment here opposed, no one is authorised to believe in Jesus, until he is *born of God*: for such only, have any degree of real holiness. Be the conscience of a sinner, therefore, ever so much burdened with guilt, he must have some evidence of his being *a new creature*, before he can consider the gospel as exhibiting any relief, or as revealing a Saviour in whom he may confide. Consequently, if, while possessed of these views, and acting consistently with them, he were to believe in Jesus; it must be under the notion of his being *already* a child of God, and of his possessing true holiness.—But, were any man, professing faith in Christ, expressly to declare, ‘That it was under the ‘notion of his previously possessing *a new heart*, or a ‘sincere love to holiness, that he first believed in Jesus ‘Christ;’ even though his exterior conduct were ever so regular, many of those who deny the position for which I plead, would be ready to suspect him of self-deception. For they, I presume, would be very appre-

hensive, that his notions were selfrighteous, and his hope delusive. But if, previous to believing in Christ, and in order to warrant a dependence upon him, there must be an holy turn of heart ; why should the person supposed fall under a suspicion so harsh ? If it be a fact, that none but those who are previously born of God, and sincerely disposed to keep his commands, are encouraged, by the gospel, to believe in Jesus Christ ; it cannot be either unlawful, or improper, from them, under that *very character and consideration*, to place their first reliance upon him. Because it is acting consistently, by applying the principle to practice. Whereas, for persons to maintain, that some degree of holiness is previously necessary to warrant our believing in Christ ; who, nevertheless, in their first application to him, consider themselves as in danger of eternal ruin, and absolutely unworthy, are inconsistent.

The principle against which I contend implies, that sinners must be *cordially reconciled* to the true character of God, as revealed in the Mediator, before they rely on Christ, and before they believe the gospel. But this is contrary to the apostolic doctrine. For, as it is by the gospel only, that the true character of God is made known to men ; so the grand mean of reconciling the hearts of sinners to God, is the doctrine of our Lord's vicarious work. This we are taught, by the following admirable passage : *All things are of God, who*

bath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and bath given to us the ministry of reconciliation : To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ; and bath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *, by us : we pray *, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. FOR he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him †. Agreeable to which view of the delightful words, is the following language of Dr. OWEN : ‘ The great work ‘ of them who are Ambassadors for Christ, to beseech men, ‘ in his stead, to be reconciled unto God ; is to reveal the ‘ will and love of the Father, in making him to be sin ‘ for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the ‘ righteousness of God in him ‡.’ Thus also Mr. CHARNOCK : ‘ The reconciliation here spoken of, was the ‘ matter of the Apostles’ discourses and sermons ; and

* The following criticism is, I think, worthy of notice ; and is laid before the judicious reader for his determination. ‘ The pronoun *you* is not in the Greek. The Apostle is not here urging the believing Corinthians to be reconciled to God ; for he considered them as already reconciled : but he is setting before them the apostolic message to the world at large, as appears from the foregoing Verse ; and therefore the supplement ought to be *men, or the world.*’ Mr. MACLEAN’s *Christ’s Commission to the Apostles*, p. 85.

† 2 Cor. v. 18—21.

‡ *Recommendatory Preface* to Mr. EYRE’s *Free Justification of a Sinner.*

‘ the great argument they used to convert the world to
‘ God *.

The gospel, strictly so called, is the doctrine of reconciliation to God, as a righteous governor, by the death of his own incarnate Son; and it is through believing the testimony of God respecting the death of Christ, that the hearts of sinners are first reconciled to God, as appearing under his true character. For, faithful and gracious as that divine testimony is, it can have no such influence on the will, any further than it is believed.—Remarkable is that saying; *If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life* †. Let us review the admirable declaration. *Reconciled WHEN WE WERE ENEMIES.* Consequently, while yet in our sins, in unregeneracy, and in spiritual death. *Reconciled to GOD;* as a righteous governor; as maintaining the rights of eternal justice, and the honours of the holy law. *Reconciled to God BY THE DEATH OF HIS SON;* he being made *sin,* and made a curse for us §. In his vicarious death, *sin* being condemned ¶ and punished, the Most High solemnly *sanc*tified** his great name ||; or, in the most emphatical manner, declared himself, his government, and his method

* Works, Vol. II. p. 170. Edition 1690.

† Rom. v. 10. § 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13.

§ Rom. viii. 3. || Ezek. xxxvi. 23.

of saving sinners, to be supremely holy. *Much more BEING RECONCILED.* This is contrasted with, *when we were ENEMIES.* The testimony of God concerning the death of Christ, being, through the divine influence, understood and believed; *the reconciliation made by the blood of Jesus, between God as a just sovereign, and us as guilty subjects of his dominion, is received **; the revealed character of God is approved; and we are *cordially reconciled to him. We shall be saved by his life*: that life which, as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, he *ever lives to make intercession for us* †. Our divinely gracious Jesus devotes his life, though in a different way, the *second time* for the happiness of his people. Having expiated their guilt on the cross, by which he reconciled them to God *when they were enemies*; and they, in the prevailing turn of their hearts, *being reconciled to the character, the grace, the dominion of God*; he lives, as *a priest on his throne* ‡ to intercede for them, and subdue their enemies; to superintend all their concerns, and to secure their final felicity.

Admitting the sentiment against which I militate, no one either does or can believe on Jesus Christ, until possessed of substantial reason to consider himself as *free from condemnation*, and as an *heir of immortal happiness*:

* Rom. v. 10. *καταλλαγήν.*

† Heb. vii. 25.

‡ Zech. vi. 12, 13.

for, that such is the state of each regenerate person—of every one distinguished and adorned by true holiness, is plain from the tenour of divine Revelation. To be a child of God, by regeneration ; to have pious affection toward God, and a cordial inclination to keep his commands ; are, in the estimate of Scripture, evidences of a safe state, and ascertain everlasting felicity to all that are so distinguished *. Yet, on the hypothesis opposed, such must be our state and character, before we are warranted to believe in Jesus !

That this is a just representation of the case, appears from the writings of an Author who strenuously maintains the reverse of that for which I plead. Thus he speaks : ‘A hearty submission to, and *acquiescence* and ‘*delight*, in the law of God, rightly understood, and so ‘a true hatred of sin, must take place *in order* to any ‘degree of true approbation of the gospel, and faith ‘and trust in Christ—The sinner who comes to Christ ‘for salvation, *comes as a true penitent* ; and *that repen-*‘*tance*—is necessary to *this* faith.’—Now, that *delight* in the law of God, rightly understood ; a *true hatred* of sin, and *real penitence*, are evidences of regeneration, and of genuine holiness, will scarcely be denied. It is equally clear, admitting the doctrine of final perseverance, that persons of such a character are safe, as to

* 1 John iii. 1. 2.

eternity : and yet, according to our Author, such must every one be, before he may dare to believe in Jesus ! —Afterwards, however, which proves my assertion, the very same Gentleman reasons in the following manner. ‘ That men are *naturally destitute of every degree of* ‘ that which has the nature of true holiness, is most evi- ‘ dent from Scripture ; in that the promises of salvation ‘ are every where made to them who exercise the *least* ‘ *degree of this*, or of that which is opposite to sin : and ‘ such have the character of *good* and *holy* persons, in ‘ distinction from others. Now, if the *least degree of* ‘ goodness intitles a man to salvation, and denominates ‘ him *a good man* ; then all men are naturally, wholly, ‘ without any degree of this, and so wholly corrupt ; ‘ for all men are represented as naturally in a state of ‘ condemnation, and wholly destitute of that which is ‘ necessary in order to their salvation *.’

Were any measure of holiness previously necessary, to warrant our believing in Jesus Christ ; pardon of sin, and peace with our offended Sovereign, should be exhibited in a gospel ministry, as before observed, to none but those who are *already born of God*: because none but they possess the least degree of genuine sanctity. Nay, the gospel should be preached to regenerate persons, *as such* ; no other being authorised to rely on Jesus, as revealed in

* Mr. S. HOPKINS's *Two Discourses*, p. 23, 24, 106. Bennington, 1793.

in it. But, would this answer the gracious designs of our Lord's command, *Preach the gospel to every creature?* Preaching the gospel is, as already observed, *proclaiming glad tidings* to guilty, depraved, and ruined creatures—tidings of pardon, of peace, and of salvation, through Jesus Christ. Preaching the gospel, is preaching Christ himself, or bearing a public testimony to his gracious gracious character, and perfect work. Preaching the gospel, therefore, is proclaiming salvation by sovereign grace—is exhibiting Jesus, not as willing to supply the deficiencies in *upright* characters ; nor, merely, as granting assistance to persons *already* in the way to heaven ; but, as the only, the allsufficient, the absolutely free Saviour of the condemned, the worthless, the lost.

Again : Did the Apostles preach Jesus Christ, or did they proclaim pardon and peace through his blood, to those only whom they considered as *really penitent*, and as having an *holy turn* of heart? The reverse is a fact: for, as we have before seen, they were commissioned to proclaim glad tidings to the profligate, impious, and wicked world. Those, however, who are truly penitent, and possessed of real holiness, are not *of the world*, but *of God*; being manifestly called out of their natural state.—When Paul was preaching to his Jewish brethren, of whom he had a painful suspicion that, while they wondered at his testimony, they would reject it and perish in their unbelief—even those Jews, who after-

ward are said to be *filled with envy, to contradict and blaspheme*; his language was, *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this illustrious Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses**. Now, as it would be a dangerous mistake to suppose, that Paul declared the sins of those ungodly Jews to be *already* forgiven, and their persons justified; so it would be inconsistent with the nature of his gracious declaration to imagine, that he did not consider them as authorised, by his infallible testimony, immediately to believe in Christ for pardon and acceptance with God.—I will add, is it supposable that Paul and Silas considered the Philippian jailor as born of God, and possessed of true holiness, when, in answer to his important query, they said; *Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved?* There is not, that I perceive, the least reason for any supposition of that kind†.

As it was under the character of a *priest*, that Christ expiated guilt, and made reconciliation; so, when a sinner first applies to him, though it be for the blessings of salvation in general, yet his eye is principally fixed on pardon and peace. Justifying faith, says Dr. OWEN, ‘ respecteth Christ in his *priestly* office alone, as he was the

* Acts xiii. 38, 39, 40, 41, 45, 46, 50.

† See *Reign of grace*, Chap. V.

‘ surety of the Covenant, with what he did in the dis-
 ‘ charge thereof. The consideration of his other offices
 ‘ is not excluded, but it is not formally comprised in
 ‘ the object of faith *as justifying**.—Thus also Mr.
 CHARNOCK : ‘ When the venom of sin begins to work
 ‘ in the conscience, and the thunder of the law alarms
 ‘ it to judgment, and the punishment due to sin is pre-
 ‘ sented in the horrors of it ; the question immediately
 ‘ is, Whether there be any remedy, and where ? How
 ‘ forgiveness of sin is to be attained ? The only remedy
 ‘ is proposed in Christ, and Christ *as a sacrifice*. It is
 ‘ not Christ risen, or ascended, or exalted : not Christ,
 ‘ only as the Son of God, or the head of angels: not
 ‘ Christ, as the creator of the world, or by whom all
 ‘ things consist : but Christ, as answering the terms of
 ‘ the first Covenant ; as disarming justice ; and this he
 ‘ did, as a *sacrifice*. By this he bore the curse ; by
 ‘ this he broke down the partition wall ; by this he
 ‘ joined apostate man and an offended God. This is
 ‘ that true faith pitcheth on, daily revolves, and daily
 ‘ applies to. This is the *first* object of the soul, Christ
 ‘ made *sin* ; Christ bearing the *punishment* ; Christ substi-
 ‘ tuted in the room of the offender—This is that which
 ‘ pacifies God ; and only that which pacifies God can
 ‘ pacify the Conscience †.’

* *On Justification*, Chap. III. † *Works*, Vol. II. p. 549.

Is it congruous, then, to suppose, that a criminal, when seeking pardon of sin and peace for his conscience, must necessarily apply for them under the notion of his previously possessing a pious turn of heart? Yet, whoever is persuaded, that any degree of holiness is absolutely necessary to warrant his believing in Jesus, cannot but regard the atonement, if, consistently with his principles, he ever do regard it, under the notion of his being possessed of the requisite sanctity.—Were the atonement of Christ entirely rejected, and were he revealed as willing to assist only the weak, but well disposed, in *saving themselves*; then, indeed, it might be esteemed rational to conclude, that whoever is authorised to depend on him for help, must be well qualified, by holy inclinations and strenuous exertions. But, for those who consider the death of Christ as vicarious and expiatory; or as constituting the only ground of hope for pardon and peace; to maintain, the necessity of holiness as warranting our dependence on that very death, is extremely inconsistent. For, according to the sentiment opposed, though the death of Jesus be, confessedly, an *atonement*; and though, by the very nature of the case, it could be intended for *none* but the guilty; yet, before any of that criminal character be permitted to regard it with affiance, they must be *holy*.

As no one can be thoroughly persuaded, that, in order to faith in Christ for pardon and acceptance, an holy

disposition is absolutely necessary, without being anxiously concerned to obtain the important requisite ; so, no sooner does he consider himself as possessing that requisite, than it becomes to him *the primary source of peace*. Yes, his first encouragement and hope arise,—not from the atonement of Christ ; not from revealed mercy ; nor from the testimony of God concerning his incarnate Son, and the work performed by him ;—but, from the *change* which has taken place in his own heart ; from the *holy tendency* of his will ; from the *difference* which subsists between himself and others, that are altogether unworthy. Conscious that some degree of moral worth attaches to his character, and considering this as previously necessary to warrant a sinner's dependence on Christ ; his first hope is derived, not from divine *grace*, as revealed in the *gospel* ; but from his own *holiness*, as required by the *LAW* : which is directly contrary to the grand principles of evangelical truth.

Our Lord says, *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life* *. Now here, it is evident, our divine Instructor teaches us to consider the dying state of the Israelites, that were bitten by the fiery serpents, as an emblem of our perishing condition by sin : the brazen serpent, elevated

* John iii. 14, 15.

on a pole, as a type of himself expiring on the cross : the looking of wounded Israelites to the brazen serpent, as emblematical of condemned sinners depending on his own death ; and the perfect recovery obtained, by viewing the artificial serpent, as emblematical of that salvation which is through faith in his atoning blood. To this, perhaps, there may be an allusion, when Jehovah says ; *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth* *. We may infer, however, that as the wounded Israelites, without any preparative, except a sense of danger be so denominated, were authorised to look at the brazen serpent, with an expectation of complete recovery ; so sinners, while destitute of every holy qualification, and as impelled by an apprehension of eternal ruin, are warranted to believe in Jesus Christ, with hope of complete salvation.

Very emphatical is the language, and exceedingly rich is the grace which appears, in the following passage. *When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward*

* Isa. xlvi. 22. Faith in Christ crucified, says Dr. OWEN, is ‘a looking unto him, (Isa. xlvi. 22. lxv. 1.) answering their looking ‘unto the brazen serpent, who were stung with fiery serpents. ‘John iii. 14, 15.’ *On Justification. General Considerations.*

*us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us *.*

—In the work of redemption by Jesus our Lord, there are two particulars on account of which the love of God to men is principally celebrated by the inspired Writers : which particulars are, *the sending of his only begotten SON*, and *the delivering him up to death for SINNERS †*. It is to the latter of these that Paul directs our attention, in the text before us. Here we have a mode of expression that is very uncommon ; and, considering of whom the Apostle speaks, it is truly wonderful; *God COMMENDETH his love!* He exhibits its brightest beauties ; he presents to our view its most winning attractives ; he displays it in the most surprising and charming point of light. As if he should say ; ‘ Such is my love ! So free, so fervent, ‘ so fruitful of benefits, and so becoming my infinite ‘ excellence, that I consider the manifestation of it, as ‘ the chief glory of all my ways respecting the sons of ‘ men ! to whom I RECOMMEND it, in a peculiar man-‘ ner, as the eternal source of their happiness, and as ‘ the principal subject of their delightful meditation.’ — *God commendeth his love TOWARD US.* Wonderful saying ! That reasonable creatures ought ever to consider divine benevolence as the fountain of their felicity, is plain to every thinking person : but that the Most High should speak of RECOMMENDING *his love*, even though

* Rom. v. 6, 7, 8.

† John iii. 16. Matt. xxi. 37. Rom. viii. 32. 1 John. iii. 16.

it were to *angels*, is truly amazing! How much more wonderful, then, to hear him speak of *commending his love to men*—to polluted mortals—to criminals, who deserve perdition!

But *how*, or in what *way*, does the Supreme commend his own philanthropy? Not by passing an act of indemnity in favour of those who lothe sin, and love holiness. Not by justifying those who have performed qualifying conditions, and by giving heaven to saints. Nor does he recommend his love to men, in pardoning their offences, accepting their persons, and bestowing immortal happiness upon them, by the mere exertion of his royal prerogative and supreme dominion. No: respecting these particulars, the admirable text is entirely silent. But it was by *sending his own Son*, and by giving him up to death for us, *when we were yet WITHOUT STRENGTH*, to perform any thing truly good; *while we were YET SINNERS*, or entirely destitute of every amiable quality; and while we were absolutely *UN-GODLY* in the turn of our hearts, and the course of our lives. In other words, a detestable compound of depravity and guilt, of weakness and unworthiness. Of such a nature is that apostate state in which we were, when *God commended his love to us*, by the gift of his incarnate Son; and by Jesus falling a victim, in our stead to eternal justice!

Again: It is worthy of observation, that Paul does not say, God commends his *mercy*, or his *grace*; but, which is yet more emphatical, delightful, and wonderful, his *LOVE*. It deserves also to be remarked, that the Father's *giving* or *sending* of his own Son, and the *voluntary death* of Jesus for us, are most commonly ascribed to the *LOVE*, not the *mercy* or the *grace*, of the Father, and of the Son *: but the blessings bestowed for the sake of Christ, are more commonly represented as flowing from *grace* or *mercy*.—*Mercy*, *grace*, and *love*, are different modifications of *goodness*; which may be thus distinguished. *Mercy*, is *goodness* to the *miserable*; *grace*, is *goodness* to the *unworthy*; and *love*, is *goodness delighting in the happiness* of its objects. When God has completely delivered his people from all the penal effects of their apostacy, they will no longer be the objects of his *goodness*, under the strict notion of *mercy*; because *mercy* has regard to *misery*. When they are perfectly free from all the *unworthiness* attending depravity and guilt, they will no longer be the objects of divine *goodness*, under the apostolic notion of *grace*†: for *grace*, in the writings of Paul, respects the *unworthiness* of a *sinful creature*. But saints will ever be the blessed objects of divine *goodness*, under the delightful notion of *LOVE*. Holy angels are the objects of divine *goodness* under the notion of *love*; but not of *mercy*, or of *grace*, in

* John iii. 16. 1 John iii. 16. iv. 9, 10. Gal. ii. 20. Eph. v. 2, 25. Rev. i. 5.

† Rom. iii. 24. iv. 4. ix. 5, 6. Eph. ii. 5—9.

the apostolic sense of those terms, when used respecting sinners.

Relative to this distinction, Dr. GOODWIN says ; *Love* is ‘ a desire to communicate good, the chiefest ‘ good, unto the creature ; but *mercy*, it is to pull the ‘ creature out of a depth of misery—So that mercy super- ‘ addeth this to love, that it respects the creature in ‘ misery. Parents, they love their children, simply as ‘ they are their *children* ; but if they be fallen into misery, ‘ then love works in a way of *pity*—It is not mercy ‘ only,—but [the Apostle] also mentioneth *love* ; ‘ —because that mercy only respecteth *misery*, as I said ‘ before : it goes no further, simply as *mercy*, than the ‘ relieving those that are in misery—Mercy causeth a ‘ king to pardon a traitor : but if he shall take this trai- ‘ tor and advance him to the highest dignity, place him ‘ with him in the throne, as it were ; this must needs ‘ be from *love* too ; this is superadding, in that respect, ‘ unto mercy—God’s *love*, it is the greatest thing of all ‘ the rest ; it is more than all his benefits. The *love* of ‘ Christ was more than his sufferings ; and his sufferings ‘ were more than his benefits : and the *love* of God, it is ‘ more than all his gifts, yet he hath given great things ‘ to us, and done great things for us. *Amor est primum* ‘ *donum* ; *his love is the first gift*, as one well faith : in ‘ the gift of which all things else are yours. The gift of ‘ his Son, it was a great gift ; but it was founded in

‘ his love. *He so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* Though we, being sinners, need *mercy*, (that is the next thing we want) and therefore we look to it, O *mercy, mercy!* because we apprehend ourselves in misery: but do you look beyond *mercy*, and look to *love*; which is a greater thing to you than *mercy*; raiseth and enlargeth *mercy*; and, when *mercy* hath done with you, will do more, or as much for you as *mercy* hath done, and guideth *mercy*—*Love* is a desire to communicate good unto us—*Mercy* respecteth us as we are fallen into sin and misery—And then that of *Grace*,—it adds but this, a *freeness* unto both. Love and *mercy* freely bestowed, that is called *grace*, in either *.’

Mr. CHARNOCK, thus: ‘ *Love* is a perfection of a higher strain than *mercy*: *mercy* may be prevalent, where *love* is absent—This [goodness of God] under the name of his *love*, is rendered [or given as] the sole cause of the redeeming death of the Son: it was to commend his *love* with the highest gloss, and in so singular a manner that had not its parallel in nature, nor in all his other works, and reaches, in the brightness of it, beyond the manifested extent of any other attribute. It must be only a miraculous goodness that

* On Eph. ii. 4, 5, 6. *Works*, Vol. I. Part II. p. 129, 130, 132, 138.

‘ induced him to expose the life of his Son to those difficulties in the world, and death upon the cross, for the freedom of torpid rebels. His great end was, to give such a demonstration of the liberality of his nature as might be attractive to his creature, remove its shakings and tremblings, and encourage its approaches to him. It is in this he would not only manifest his love, but assume the Name of LOVE. By this name the Holy Ghost calls him in relation to this good will manifested in his Son: *God is LOVE.* In this is manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. He would take the Name he never expressed himself in before. He was JEHOVAH, in regard of the truth of his promise: so he expressed himself of old. He is GOODNESS, in regard of the grandeur of his affection in the mission of his Son: and therefore he would be known by the name of LOVE now, in the days of the gospel*.’

If, then, the highest demonstration of divine favour; that which, in the estimate of God himself, is the grand recommendation of his love to men; consist in his giving Jesus to die for us while we were yet sinners, ungodly, and without strength; we may safely conclude, that

* Works, Vol. II. p. 333. Vol. I. Discourse on the Goodness of God.

the sentiment opposed cannot be *to the praise of the glory of his grace.* For, how incongruous it is to suppose, that though the blessed God *recommend* his love to us, considered as mere sinners ; and though it is in Christ only, as dying for mere sinners, that the admirably glorious properties of divine love are to be seen ; yet, before those very sinners for whom Christ died, and to whom God recommends his love, are *permitted* to believe in Jesus, and to behold the wonderful excellencies of that amazing love, they must have some degree of spiritual strength—they must become *godly*—they must be real *saints* ! for all these ideas attach to every one that possesses the least measure of true holiness. God, in the death of Jesus, recommends his love to *sinners*, or the *ungodly* ; yet they must cease to be such before they regard it !—Should any persons of so base a character presume to approach the dying Jesus as their only hope, the ungracious genius of that principle against which I contend cries in their ears, *Procul ô, procul este profani : Hence, far hence, O ye profane !*

Had the glorious God been represented as recommending his love to the *penitent*, the *upright*, the *virtuous* ; we might have concluded, that none but persons of those amiable characters were authorised to regard Christ with dependence, and with expectation. But, had that been the case, the love of God to us could not, with propriety, have been so contrasted, as it is here, with the love of

one man to another. *For sinners love those that love them** ; and the Apostle admits, that, for a good man, some one perhaps may *even dare to die*. Besides, on that supposition, the divine Father might have been viewed, and would certainly have been considered by distressed souls, as commanding his love to *rectitude*, to *virtue*, to *holiness*, rather than to *sinners* ; and the absolutely unworthy would have had no ground of hope.— Whereas, if Christ died for us *while we were yet sinners* ; and if God, by that very fact, more than by any other effect of divine goodness, *commend* his love to us ; we ought, surely, to consider the eternal Father as recom-mending the *crucified Jesus* to us, while we are *yet sinners*—recommending him, as an allsufficient Saviour for the most guilty ; as perfectly suitable to the circumstances of the most needy ; and as completely free for the most unworthy. Thus he is revealed in the glad tidings : and what is believing in Jesus, but relying upon him, or treating him, according to this view of his character ? God himself, in the death of Christ, commanding his love to mere sinners ; the ungodly must be warranted thankfully to regard that recommendation, and to believe in the Son of God.

Christ is made *sanctification* to all that are truly converted†. Every holy disposition, therefore, in the

* Luke vi. 32. † 1 Cor. i. 30.

heart of a sinner must be received from him. Ought we, then, to support the affirmative of what is opposed, to consider our Lord as actually made sanctification to any sinner, who is not authorised to believe in him? or imagine that an ungodly person must receive holiness from Jesus Christ, in order to warrant his dependence upon him? So to do, would confound the state of believers with that of unbelievers; would invert the order of things in the method of grace, and be attended with various absurdities.—Does the Most Holy sanctify any sinner? it is as *the God of peace**: but he bears that delightful character, only as *reconciling the world to himself* by the death of Christ. For, as Mr. CHAR-
SICK observes, ‘God only sanctifies as a *God of peace*’—Would we be *perfect in every good work*; would we do the will of God; would we have every thing well-pleasing in his sight wrought in us? then we should go ‘to him as a *God of peace*†.’—‘Sanctification,’ says Dr. OWEN, ‘is a fruit and effect of that peace with [God,] which he hath made and prepared for us, by Jesus Christ. For he was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, destroying the enmity which entered by sin, and laying the foundation of eternal peace. From hence it is, that he will *sanctify* us, or make us holy; without a respect whereunto he would no more do so,

* 1 Thess. v. 23.

† Heb. xiii. 20, 21. *Works*, Vol. II. p. 222.

' than he will sanctify again the *angels* that have sinned ;
 ' for whom there is *no peace* made, nor atonement *.'—

Must it not be necessary, then, for sinners to regard the atonement of Christ as allsufficient, in which the divine Father appears under that gracious character, *the God of peace* ; in order to a well-grounded expectation of ever possessing the least degree of true holiness ?

Coming to Christ, and believing on him, are the same thing ; as appears from the words of our Lord himself. *He that COMETH to me, shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst* †. Now, the Scripture informs us, that *the wrath of God*, or the curse of the law, *abides on him* who believes not in Christ ‡. But will the Bible authorise our supposing, that any one possessed of true holiness is under *the wrath of God*? Yet that is evidently implied in the hypothesis here opposed, when compared with the awful declaration just produced.

Our Lord says, *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me* §. According to the phraseology of Scripture, to be *in Christ*, most commonly denotes vital union with him, acceptance before God, and complete

* Discourse concerning the *Holy Spirit*, B. IV. Chap. I. § 8.

† John vi. 35. ‡ John iii. 36. § John xv. 4.

freedom from condemnation *. Privileges, these, which are not enjoyed by unbelievers. No ; there must be *faith in the blood of Jesus* †, before any one can be justly considered as thus united to him, and thus accepted of God.—If, notwithstanding, the reverse of what I maintain be true, there not only *may*, but there absolutely **MUST** be the fruits of righteousness, before there can be vital union with Christ : nay, before a sinner can be permitted to regard the gospel, as revealing a Saviour in whom he may confide. Because, in whomsoever an holy disposition is implanted, it will, more or less, exert itself in pious affections, and righteous conduct : which must be considered in the light of spiritual fruit.—I said, *vital union* ; like that of a living branch to a flourishing vine. For, so far as I have observed, it is allowed by all who are conversant in these affairs, that, previous to believing in Jesus Christ, there is no such union between him and any sinner.

The Scriptures teach us to consider all unbelievers as in a state of enmity to God, and of spiritual death. *To the unbelieving, we are also informed, nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled* ‡. The affirmative, however, of what I deny, supposes that sinners must be alive to God—the friends of God—and

* 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. i. 6. Rom. viii. 1. † Rom. iii. 25.
‡ Titus i. 15.

have some degree of spiritual purity, before they obtain permission to believe in Jesus. For I think it is demonstrable, that he in whose heart any holy disposition resides, is neither under the dominion of disaffection to God, nor in spiritual death, nor destitute of spiritual purity.

Under whatever characters Christ is represented as considering his people, with reference to their legal and moral state, when he gave himself a ransom for them ; under the very same characters are unconverted persons warranted to believe in him. For we cannot suppose, without absurdity, that Christ died for men under *one* character, and that they must depend upon his death under *another*. Now it is plain, from the Records of Inspiration, that those whom Christ came to save, and for whom he died, were considered by him, as *guilty*—as *ungodly*—as *enemies to God*—as *extremely depraved*—as *the chief of sinners*—as *justly condemned*—and as *loft**. Consequently, such being their native characters, and such their awful state, they must believe in him at first, not as *qualified* persons, but as *perishing* wretches ; not as *adorned* with the beauties of holiness, but as *lothsome* with the pollution of hell. How strange, how incongruous, the following position : Christ came, and expired

* 1 Tim. i. 15. Rom. v. 6, 8, 9, 10. John iii. 3, 5. Titus iii. 3. Gal. iii. 10, 13. Luke xix. 10.

on a cross, PROFESSEDLY to save *sinners*—the *ungodly*—the *enemies of God*, and so on ; yet, before any of them can warrantably believe in him for salvation, they must be under the influence of a *pious disposition*—they must possess a principle of *universal holiness* ! In other words, they must cease to be, in a scriptural sense, those characters which Christ intended to relieve, when he *gave himself a ransom for many*—when he *was made sin*, and *made a curse* ; before they are authorised to place the least confidence in him !

I said, *in a scriptural sense* : because they who possess the least degree of true holiness, are not, either in the Old or the New Testament, denominated, absolutely, *sinners*, the *ungodly*, the *lost*, and so on ; but the reverse. Yes, notwithstanding their numerous and criminal imperfections, with regard to inherent holiness and personal obedience ; they are characterised, Those that *know the Lord*—*fear the Lord*—*love the Lord*—*serve the Lord* : the *righteous*—the *upright*—the *perfect* : *disciples*, *believers*, *faithful brethren*, *sons of God*, *saints*, and so on. For every one that possesses any measure of real holiness, is *born of God* ; and is, therefore, denominated according to his *new state*, even while he

perceives abundant reason for daily abasement before God *.

It was the design of our Lord, in his admirable parable of the Prodigal, and in that of the Publican †, to inform us, Under what *character*, or under what *consideration* of ourselves, we must apply to God for pardon, for peace, and for salvation. What, then, are the most prominent features of those two parabolical persons, when viewed as coming to God for acceptance? The Prodigal appears as a ragged, filthy, starving wretch; who, impelled by mere necessity, returns to his Father, without any recommendation of person, or of character; and as deserving to be for ever exheridated. The Publican, smitten with a sense of enormous guilt; far from considering himself as possessing any holy disposition; and harrassed with apprehensions of eternal ruin; appears as a criminal who deserves to be damned, and who dares not lift up his eyes to heaven, even when *he cries for mercy* through an atonement. Surely, then, these characters, and the scope of these parables, are far from teaching, that sinners must have some degree of holiness before they be authorised to believe in Jesus.— Nay, in the parable of the *Pharisee* and the *Publican*,

* Job. i. 8. ix. 20, 21, 30, 31. xl. 4. xlvi. 5, 6. Ps. cxxx. 3, 4. cxliii. 2. Prov. xxiv. 16. Rom. vii. 15.—viii. 1, 2. 1 John i. 8, 9, 10.

† Luke xv. 11—32. xviii. 10—14.

our Lord so describes the former as to show, that whoever approaches God, with a view to *justification* before him, under any other character than that of a *miserable sinner*; or as encouraged by any other consideration, than that of *mercy revealed* in the atonement; is chargeable with selfrighteous pride, and sure to meet with a fatal disappointment.

I said, *with a view to JUSTIFICATION before God*: for this is the single point under consideration. Because it was *that* for which our Lord represents the Pharisee and Publican, as addressing the Most High; and because it is *that* which an awakened sinner principally seeks, in his first application to Jesus Christ.—Has a person *believed through grace*? has he already *received the atonement*? and is he approaching the throne of divine mercy for a fresh application of pardon, with reference to the imperfection of his duties, the daily operation of his corruptions, and the backslidings of which he is conscious? Or, does he apply for larger measures of sanctifying influence? he may come to God as one of his *disobedient children*, or as a *feeble and very imperfect follower* of Jesus Christ, crying, *Abba, Father*. Nay, when lamenting over his indwelling depravity and actual transgressions, he may even say; *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men*, that are profligates in their conduct; that are dead in sin; or that are seeking to *establish their own righteousness*. For the Pharisee, in this parable, is

not censured, merely because he thanked God for the difference which subsisted between himself, and the profigate part of the world ; but because he placed that difference to the account of his *justification before God*. In that respect, the chaste lady, and the vile prostitute ; the most virtuous characters, and the greatest profligates, are completely on a level ; having only one common ground of hope—*the vicarious obedience of Jesus Christ*.

It must, I think, be granted, that when a sinner first believes in Jesus, he is concerned chiefly about pardon and acceptance with God. But, if so, the spirit of those instructive parables to which I advert, absolutely forbids our supposing, that any degree of holiness is required of a sinner, to warrant his dependence on Christ. We will, however, for the sake of argument, admit the contrary. We will suppose that a sinner, under a persuasion of his possessing some degree of true sanctity, applies to the glorious Jesus ; and that he addresses God in prayer, for justification, agreeably to this view of himself. What, then, will be the spirit of his address at the throne of Eternal Majesty ? Must it not, either expressly or implicitly, be as follows ? ‘God, ‘ *I thank thee, that I am not as the multitude of other men !* Once, indeed, I lived in disobedience, and ‘ loved sin : but now it is otherwise, as to the turn of ‘ my heart, and the course of my life. Having a pious ‘ disposition; my will is under an holy bias ; which leads

‘ me to revere thy authority, and to keep thy commands.
‘ Thus possessing the requisite divinely prescribed to all
‘ those that would acceptably believe in Jesus, and
‘ through his merits obtain justification ; I cannot doubt,
‘ either of acceptance with thee, or of admission into
‘ thy eternal kingdom.’—This, or something similar, is
the genuine language of every one who, in his devotional
addresses relative to *justification*, proceeds on that ungra-
cious principle which I oppose ! There is reason to
think, however, that many who warmly *dispute* for the
principle, entirely desert it in *prayer*; and would even
be shocked to hear a religious address to the Deity,
respecting justification, formed upon it.—But, if the
principle in question be an article of divine truth, it must
be of great importance : for it enters deeply into the
doctrine of justification. Why should it not, then, by
all that embrace it, be avowed in their solemn prayers
for pardon and acceptance, especially by those who,
with the Pharisee, consider themselves as possessing the
requisite holiness ? Why does it not make a conspicuous
appearance in their devotional practice ? To scruple the
propriety of such an avowal, is an implicit condemnation
of the principle itself.

Remarkably pertinent, relative to this particular, is
the following language of Dr. OWEN. The Pharisee
ascribes ‘ all that he did to God. *God, I thank thee :*
‘ although he did all [he mentions,] yet he owned the

‘ aid and assistance of God, by his grace, in it all. He
‘ esteemed himself much to differ from other men, but
‘ he ascribed it not unto himself that so he did. All
‘ the righteousness and holiness which he laid claim unto,
‘ he ascribed unto the benignity and goodness of God.
‘ Wherefore he neither pleaded any *merit* in his works,
‘ nor any works performed in his *own strength*, without
‘ the aid of grace. All that he pretends is, that by the
‘ grace of God he had fulfilled the *condition* of the Cove-
‘ nant, and thereon expected to be justified. And
‘ whatever words men shall be pleased to make use of in
‘ their vocal prayers, God interprets their minds accord-
‘ ing to what they trust in, as unto their justification
‘ before him. And if some men will be true to their
‘ *own principles*, this [prayer of the Pharisee] is the
‘ prayer which, *mutatis, mutandis*, they *ought* to make.*.’

Paul, when proving the doctrine of justification by an imputed righteousness, and when adducing the case of Abraham as quite in point, thus interrogates and replies; *How was it* (the Patriarch’s faith, or that in which he believed) *then reckoned?* *When he was in circumcision?* *Or in uncircumcision?* *Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision* †. The Apostle’s design in these queries and answers was to evince, that justification before God is of mere grace, by an imputed righteousness; and that no

* *Doctrine of Justification*, Chap. XVII.

† Rom. iv. 10.

duty performed by us, nor any holiness wrought in us, has the least influence in procuring that inestimable blessing. Adopting the inspired Writer's manner of speaking, I may, therefore, interrogate and answer thus : How, then, is the vicarious obedience of Christ imputed to a sinner ? When he is possessed of *true holiness* ? Or when he is considered as *ungodly* ? Not when in the *former*, but while in the *latter* state : for the text is express, *He that justifieth the ungodly**. Consequently, no degree of holiness is previously necessary to warrant our believing in Jesus Christ : because it would be absurd to consider any person as *ungodly*, who possesses the least measure of real holiness.

They who are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick ; is a maxim of common sense, as well as of Scripture. Now Christ is the physician of souls, whose disease consists in depravity and guilt. To suppose, therefore, that sinners must possess any measure of true holiness, before they are warranted to believe in Jesus ; is equally incongruous as to maintain, that a patient must be in a convalescent state, before he can, with propriety, apply to a physician. For, I presume it must be admitted, that when any sinner becomes possessed of holy inclinations, he is, in a moral sense, *convalescent*. His recovery is *begun* : and taking the doctrine of perse-

* Rom. iv. 5.

verance for granted, certain to be completed. But is it congruous to suppose, that any sinner should have substantial reason to conclude upon his own final happiness, as the sentiment opposed implies, before he be authorised to believe in Jesus Christ ?

The Scripture teacheth, that real holiness is the *fruit* of evangelical truth understood and received *. But the sentiment against which I contend implies, either, that the gospel may be received, without relying on Christ ; or, that holiness may exist in the heart of a sinner, who does not believe the truth : neither of which can be supported by the word of God. Not the *former* : for the genuine gospel is the testimony of God concerning Christ. It is a revelation, and an exhibition, of his Person and offices ; of his grace and work †. He therefore, who receives the gospel, or admits the glad tidings into his heart ‡ ; receives Christ himself §, who is the substance of those joyful tidings.—Not the *latter* : for while a person disbelieves that which, by way of eminence, is called THE TRUTH, he remains disaffected to God, and virtually makes him *a liar* ||. It may be safely concluded, therefore, that such an one has no holiness in him.

* Matt. xiii. 23. John xvii. 17, 19. Eph. iv. 24. Gr.

† Gal. iii. 1. ‡ Rom. vi. 17. x. 10. Acts viii. 37.

§ John i. 11, 12. Col. ii. 6. || 1 John v. 10.

The most remarkably gracious *proclamations* and *invitations* to sinners, that stand recorded by the inspired pen, may here be pleaded. *PROCLAMATIONS*: *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money! Come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!* and so on. *Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!*—*Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.* *She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Who so is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled* *.—*INVITATIONS*: *Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind—Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in—Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest—The Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that heareth say, Come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely* †.
—To these proclamations and invitations, that gracious

* Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. John vii. 37. Prov. ix. 1—5.

† Luke xiv. 21, 23. Matt. xi. 28. Rev. xxii. 17.

PROMISE may be annexed ; *Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out* *.

On reviewing the divinely gracious proclamations, invitations, and promise, just adduced, we observe the following descriptive characters : *Every one that thirsteth after happiness, and seeks it—not in Christ, and in the enjoyment of spiritual blessings provided by sovereign mercy* ; but, in the pursuit of sensual gratifications, of temporal riches, of secular honours, of philosophical acquisitions, of superstitious observances, or of acceptance with God by his own righteousness ; which are *not bread, and cannot satisfy* †.—*He that hath no money; no recommending qualification, or moral worth—The simple, and those that are void of understanding; the ignorant and wicked—The poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; mere mendicants, that are in the streets and lanes of the city—Those, in the country, that are in the highways, and under the hedges; travellers, without exception, and the most miserable vagrants—Those, finally, that are burdened with guilt, and have sought relief, in methods of their own devising, but have not found it.*

* John vi. 37.

† Vide VITRINGAM in *Jesaiam*, 55, 1, 2, 3. Mr. HERVEY's *Theron and Aspasio*, Vol. III. p. 338. Mr. T. BOSTON's *Works*, p. 227, 845.

We further observe, with surprise and joy, that our divine Lord, far from overlooking these outcasts of society and refuse of mankind, gives the following order to his ministering servants ; *Compel them*, by forcible arguments and winning persuasion, *to come in*, and be guests at my table. Or, as it is elegantly expressed by an evangelical writer ; ‘ The messengers are sent, not to ‘ the mansion-houses’ of the rich, or the palaces of the ‘ mighty ; but to the *highways and hedges* : where misery ‘ mourns, and poverty pines, and baseness hides her ‘ head *.’—Nay, the SUPREME LORD himself, as it were in person, condescends to address the guilty, the impoverished, the perishing creatures ; and his language is, ‘ *Ho, every one !* be his iniquities ever so many, his ‘ depravity ever so great, or his guilt ever so enormous. ‘ *Come to the waters* ; to the source of supplies, where ‘ plenty is provided for the use of those that are starving. ‘ *Come and take freely*, of the wine, and the milk, and ‘ the water of life—of all the blessings provided by grace, ‘ for the relief of spiritual indigence, for the peace of ‘ distressed consciences, and for the healing of diseased ‘ souls. *Come, come, yea COME !* Think not that your ‘ poverty and rags, your crimes and your guilt, prohibit ‘ access to the storehouse of spiritual blessings, or forbid ‘ expectation of being relieved by reigning grace. For ‘ I solemnly assure you, that all the benefits of sovereign ‘ mercy were intended, only for the guilty—the depraved ‘ —the utterly destitute :—for those only, who have

* HERVEY, *Theron and Aspasio*, Vol. III. p. 311.

' nothing but the revelation of my grace, to keep them
' from despair now ; nor any thing besides the provisions
' of that grace, to preserve them from damnation here-
' after. Whoever, therefore, on the credit of my royal
' proclamation, or on the fidelity of my irrevocable
' promise, applies for relief, shall not, upon any consi-
' deration of his past provocations, or of his present
' pollution, be rejected. *Rejected!* nothing less. For,
' *to the praise of the glory of my grace,* he shall find accep-
' tance, and have salvation.'

To maintain that a sinner, before he can warrantably believe in Jesus, must have some degree of holiness, is contrary to the apostolic doctrine of justification before God. To this particular I have, indeed, repeatedly adverted : but it is of so much importance, as to deserve a more distinct consideration. The principle, then, is inconsistent with the apostolic doctrine of justification by *mere grace* ; with the *character* of those whom God justifies ; and is adapted to encourage *boasting*.

It is inconsistent with justification by MERE GRACE. Relative to this affair, the language of Inspiration is, *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ* *. No words, equally few, could more strongly express the most perfectly gratuitous justi-

* Rom. iii. 24.

fication of a sinner, than these, FREELY, *by his GRACE* : and it is an axiom with Paul, That whatever blessing is *of GRACE, it is not of works ; otherwise grace is no more grace* : and that, whatever blessing is *of WORKS, it is not of grace ; otherwise work is no more work* *.—Nor ought it here to be objected, either, That the sentiment censured respects, not *exterior conduct*, but the state of the *heart* : or, That the holiness intended is an effect of *divine grace*. Not the *former* : for what is exterior conduct, respecting the affairs of religion, in which the *heart* is not right with God ? It may satisfy the person himself ; it may please his neighbours ; it may be hypocritify ; but it is not righteousness.—Not the *latter* : like the Pharisee in the parable, even when pleading his own righteousness for justification, *thanked God for preserving and assisting grace* †.—‘ No words can be found out,’ says Dr. OWEN, ‘ to free our justification before God ‘ from all respect unto any thing in ourselves, but only ‘ what is added expressly as the means of its participa- ‘ tion on our part, *through faith in his blood*, more emphatical than those here used by the Apostle ‡, FREELY ‘ *by his GRACE*. And with whom this is not admitted ‘ as exclusive of all works or obedience of our own ; ‘ *of all conditions, preparations, and merit* ; I shall despair of ever expressing my conceptions about it intelligibly unto them §.’

* Rom. xi. 6. † Luke xviii. 11.

§ *Doctrine of Justification*, Chap. VI.

‡ Rom. iii. 24.

With the CHARACTER of those whom God justifies. Thus it is described by the Apostle : *To him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt.* *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness* *. He that *worketh not*—the *ungodly*: such is the character of him that believes in Jesus, and whom God graciously justifies ! But if the mere sinner be not authorised to believe in Jesus ; if any degree of holiness be previously necessary to faith in him ; I do not perceive how it can be considered as a fact, that God justifies him who *worketh not*, or any that are *ungodly*. Let us again hear Dr. OWEN, expressing himself as follows ; ‘ To say, he who *worketh not*, is justified through believing ; is to say, that his works, whatever they be, have no influence into his justification ; nor hath God, in justifying him, any respect unto them. Wherefore he alone who *worketh not* is the subject of justification ; the person to be justified. That is, God considereth no man’s works, no man’s duties of obedience, in his justification ; seeing we are justified freely by his grace. And when God affirmeth expressly, that he justifieth him who *worketh not*, and that freely by his grace ; I cannot understand what place our works, or duties, of obedience, can have in our justification. For why should we trouble ourselves to invent of what consideration they may be,

* Rom. iv. 4, 5.

' in our justification before God, when he himself affirms
' that they are of *none at all*? Neither are the words
' capable of any evading interpretation. *He that worketh*
' *not, is he that worketh not*, let men say what they
' please, and distinguish as long as they will. And it is
' a boldnes not to be justified, for any to rise up in oppo-
' sition to such express divine testimonies, however they
' may be harnessed with philosophical notions and argu-
' ings ; which are but as thorns and briars which the
' word of God will pafs through and consume.

' But the Apostle further adds, in the description of
' the subject of justification, that God *justifieth the UN-*
' **GODLY**. This is that expression which hath stirred up
' so much wrath among many, and on account whereof
' some seem to be much displeased with the Apostle him-
' self. If any other person dare but say, that God
' *justifieth the UNGODLY*; he is presently reflected on as
' one that, by his doctrine, would overthrow the necessity
' of godliness, holiness, obedience, or good works.
' For what need can there be of any of them,-if God
' *justifieth the ungodly*? Howbeit, this is a periphrasis of
' God, that he is he who *justifieth the UNGODLY*. This
' is his prerogative and property. *As such* he will be
' believed and worshipped ; which adds weight and em-
' phasis unto the expression : and we must not forego
' this testimony of the Holy Ghost, let men be as angry
' as they please. But the difference is about the *mean-*

‘*ing* of the words. If so, it may be allowed without mutual offence, though we should mistake their proper sense. Only it must be granted, that God *justifieth the ungodly*. That is, say some, those who *formerly were ungodly*; not such who *continue ungodly* when they are justified: and this is most true. All that are justified, were before ungodly: and all that are justified, are at the same instant made godly. But the question is, Whether they are godly or ungodly, *antecedently, in any moment of time, unto their justification?* If they are considered as *godly*, and are so indeed, then the Apostle’s words are not true, that God *justifieth the ungodly*: for the contradictory proposition is true, God *justifieth none but the godly*. Wherefore, although in, and with, the justification of a sinner, he is made godly; for he is endowed with that faith which purifieth the heart, and is a vital principle of all obedience, and the conscience is purged from dead works by the blood of Christ; yet, antecedently unto his justification, he *is ungodly*, and *considered* as ungodly; as one who *worketh not*; as one whose duties and obedience contribute nothing to his justification. As he *worketh not*, all works are excluded from being the *cause*; and as he is *ungodly*, from being the *condition*, of his justification—Not this, or that sort of works; not this, or that manner of the performance of them; not this, or that kind of interest in our justification; but *all* works of what sort soever, and however performed, are

‘ excluded from *any kind* of consideration in our justification, as our works or duties of obedience.

‘ It will be said, *That our personal obedience is by none asserted to be the righteousness whereby we are justified before God, in the same MANNER as it was under the Covenant of works.* But the argument speaks, not ‘ as unto the manner, or *way*, whereby it is so ; but to ‘ the *thing itself*. If it be so in *any way* or manner, ‘ under what qualifications soever, we are under that ‘ Covenant still. If it be of works *any way*, it is not of ‘ grace at all—*All is now resolved into the merit of Christ,* ‘ upon the account whereof alone, our own personal righteousness is accepted before God unto our justification. ‘ The question is not, On what *account*, nor for what ‘ *reason*, it is so accepted ; but whether it be, or no : ‘ seeing its so being is effectually constitutive of a Covenant of works *.’

The sentiment is adapted to *encourage boasting*. This, however, is directly contrary to the apostolic doctrine. For Paul assures us, that, by God’s method of justifying sinners, all boasting, even in *comparative worthiness*, is entirely, and for ever excluded. Thus he interrogates and determines : *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—Where is boasting,*

* *Doctrine of Justification*, Chap. XVIII, XIII.

then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith—By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast *. According to the doctrine of Paul, a justified sinner, with reference to the moment preceding his justification, has no more ground to think well of his personal qualifications, or to applaud his own exertions, relative to that affair; than his unhappy neighbour has, who is dying under a curse, and sinking into final ruin.—But, admitting that any degree of holiness be necessary to warrant a sinner's dependence on Christ, it must be so to justification through faith in his blood: because it is in virtue of personal sanctity that he is qualified for *believing*; and, consequently, for the *imputation* of our Lord's vicarious obedience to him. His own righteousness being thus essentially necessary, must share in the honour of his justification. Surely, then, whoever is thus prepared for the benefit of an imputed righteousness, must have, in comparison with others that are not so qualified, *cause of boasting*.

For, as Dr. OWEN argues, ‘ If we are in *any sense* justified [by our personal righteousness] in the sight of God, we have *whereof to boast* before him. We may not have so *absolutely*, and with respect to merit; yet

* Rom. iii. 24, 27. Eph. ii. 8, 9.

‘ we have so *comparatively*, and in respect of *others*, who
‘ cannot make the same plea for their justification. But
‘ all *boasting* is excluded : and it will not relieve, to say,
‘ *That this personal righteousness is of the free grace and gift*
‘ *of God unto some, and not unto others* ; for we must
‘ plead it as our *duty*, and not as God’s *grace*—*Boasting*
‘ *is excluded*. Apparent it is from hence, and from
‘ what [the Apostle] affirms concerning Abraham *,
‘ that a great part, at least, of the controversy he had
‘ about justification, was, Whether it did admit of any
‘ *καυχησις*, or *καυχημα*, in those that are justified ?—
‘ *Boasting*, in our language, is the name of a *vice*, and
‘ is never taken in a good sense. But *καυχησις*, or
‘ *καυχημα*, the words used by the Apostle, are of an
‘ indifferent signification ; and, as they are applied,
‘ may denote a *virtue*, as well as a *vice*. So they do,
‘ Heb. iii. 6 †. But always, and in all places, they
‘ respect something that is peculiar in, or unto, whom
‘ they are ascribed. Wherever any thing is ascribed
‘ unto one, and not unto another, with respect unto any
‘ good end, there is a *fundamentum καυχησεως*, a *founda-*
‘ *tion for boasting*. All this, saith the Apostle, in the
‘ matter of our justification, is utterly excluded. But
‘ wherever respect is had unto any *condition*, or *qualifica-*
‘ *tion*, in one more than another, especially if it be of

* Rom. iv. 2. † See also Rom. xv. 17. 1 Cor. i. 31.
Gal. vi. 14. with many other places.

‘ works ; it giveth *a ground of boasting*, as he affirmeth,
‘ Rom. iv. 2. And it appears, from comparing that
‘ Verse with this, [Rom. iii. 27.] that wherever there
‘ is *any influence* of our own works into our justification,
‘ there is *a ground of boasting*. But, in evangelical justifi-
‘ cation, no such boasting in any kind can be admitted.
‘ Wherefore, there is *no place* for works, in our justifica-
‘ tion before God : for if there were, it is impossible
‘ but a *καυχημα*, [*boasting*,] in one kind or other, before
‘ God or man, must be admitted *.’—I have enlarged
the more on this particular, that the reader may perceive
how nearly the principle opposed relates to the doctrine
of justification ; and how much this capital doctrine is
corrupted by that principle.

Once more : Supposing it necessary for every sinner to possess more, or less, of true holiness, before he be authorised to believe in Christ ; it is hard to conceive how any one ever can believe in him. This, perhaps, may appear by the following considerations. Whoever believes in Jesus, relies on him as redeeming sinners from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell. No one, therefore, depends upon him, till convinced of sin, and apprehensive of danger. Now, as nothing but sin exposes men to present condemnation, and final ruin ; so it is that only which renders them filthy, and

* *Doctrine of Justification*, Chap. VI.

vile, and worthless. The more any one, therefore, feels his want of deliverance from *the wrath to come*; the more keenly sensible he must be of his complicated guilt, his great baseness, and his absolute unworthiness, in the sight of God. While, consequently, he is persuaded, that some degree of holiness is previously necessary to warrant his reliance on Jesus Christ; he must either labour to reform his life, to amend his heart, and to obtain some righteousness of his own, as the pedestal on which to stand when laying hold of Christ, or sink in despair: and, in either case, he is far from believing on the Son of God.—Thus, while earnestly desiring an interest in Christ, and considering himself as destitute of the requisite holiness, he, as the Prophet speaks, *labours in the very fire*, and *wearies himself for very vanity*. Having such views of himself, and of the character under which only he is warranted to believe in Jesus; neither the gospel, with its cheering declarations; nor the Mediator, with his immense fulness of blessings and of grace, can afford him the least relief; they being quite out of his reach. Because, till conscious of an holy disposition, or a pious turn of heart, he neither does, nor can consider himself as one toward whom the gospel wears a smiling aspect; or as authorised to take the least encouragement from it. On the hypothesis opposed, therefore, nothing but embarrassment, and painful disappointment, are likely to attend him.—But were he, by strenuous efforts, to obtain a persuasion,

that his inclinations have taken a virtuous turn ; that his internal character is greatly improved ; and, under this consideration of himself, to conclude, That *now* he may believe in Jesus Christ ; what must be thought of his conduct ? Why, that he is ignorant of the gospel ; that he is *of the works of the law* * ; and, that the pains he has taken have produced a good conceit of himself, rather than prepared him for faith in Jesus Christ. So inimical to solid peace and real holiness is the sentiment which I oppose, that, according to the different state of a person's conscience, it has a natural tendency, either to *elevate* with selfrighteous pride, or to *depress* with desponding fear. The *former*, if the great evil of sin be not perceived, and the conscience drowsy : the *latter*, if the mind be enlightened, and the conscience tender. For, as Dr. OWEN has well observed, ‘ The more spiritual any man is, the more he sees of his *unspiritualness* in his spiritual duties †.

[On this hypothesis there is, indeed, no such thing as *gospel*, or glad tidings, for any of those whom the Scriptures denominate, *sinners*—the *ungodly*—the *lost*—those who are in the way to final ruin. Because, according to the principle against which I plead, all the revealed relief by Jesus Christ, is directed to those only whose hearts are under an *holy bias*. But the sacred Writers

* Gal. iii. 10.

† *On the cxxx Psalm*, p. 345.

are far from pronouncing persons of that character, the *ungodly*, or the *lost*: and they are equally far from teaching, that creatures, possessing any degree of true sanctity, are in danger of eternal perdition. For it is absurd to suppose, that our divine Sovereign will ever send holiness to hell: or that the subjects of truly pious dispositions are in the road to ruin.

Whereas, if we consider the inspired Writings as exhibiting a full, free, and everlasting salvation, by Jesus Christ, for the chief of sinners; if we consider the testimony of God concerning his incarnate Son, as a complete warrant for the most guilty and ungodly to believe in him; there is a revealed foundation of hope for the vilest of men, even when they have the strongest conviction of that being their proper character. The word of grace, respecting the perfect work of Christ, being viewed in this light, is deservedly, and by way of singular eminence, called, THE GLAD TIDINGS. For, be the wants of a sinner ever so many, and his unworthiness ever so great, the allsufficient Jesus is presented to view, as encouraging his immediate dependence, and as rejecting none that apply to him. Agreeably to which Mr. HERVEY says; ‘ Nothing is requisite, in order to ‘ a participation of Christ and his benefits, but *a grant* ‘ *from God**.’—It is not under the notion, of being

* *Theron and Aspasio*, Vol. II. p. 374. Note. Edit. 5th.

elected to everlasting life ; of possessing any virtuous disposition ; of being, by good habits or qualities, distinguished from other men ; of being well humbled for sin ; or of being deeply awakened in conscience, that sinners must first believe in Jesus. No : but as transgressors ; as in a perishing state ; and as having nothing to preserve them from despair, except what the Scripture says concerning Christ, his offices, and his grace. It is, at least, in this view of the gospel, and of Jesus as revealed by it, that the writer of these pages either enjoys peace, or expects felicity.

CHAPTER III.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

AGAINST the sentiment for which I plead, and in opposition to the course of my reasoning, it has been strenuously urged; ‘Repentance includes an holy disposition, and must precede faith in Christ.’—But, supposing the priority of repentance to faith were granted, it would infer no valid objection to the principle here defended: except it were proved, that repentance must precede, as constituting an essential part of the sinner’s *warrant* to believe in Jesus. That, however, is not likely to be soon evinced.

In what light, then, is true repentance to be considered? As *a change of mind*, or *after-thought*? This, indeed, seems to be the literal import of the original word *metanoia*: and that, we acknowledge, precedes faith in Jesus Christ. For while a sinner is either stupidly inattentive to his immortal interests, or expecting justification by his own obedience, he will not come to Christ.—As *a conviction of sin*, attended with apprehensions of eternal ruin? This also, it is readily granted, precedes faith in Christ. For, whoever believes in Jesus,

regards him as the only Saviour from divine wrath : respecting the danger of which, a conviction of sin must precede. Nay, we are led, by the language of Scripture, to consider believing in Christ, as no other than *fleeing to the hope set before us*, that we may escape *the wrath to come* *. That conviction of sin and sense of danger, should not be considered, however, as inducing God to give, but as inclining us to receive : not as exciting the Father of mercies to forgive our offences, or the compassionate Jesus to justify our persons ; but as impelling us to accept the provision which sovereign grace has made for the entirely destitute. Besides, neither that *change of mind*, nor this *apprehension of danger*, can be justly considered as an holy disposition : because they respect the state of the intellect, and of the conscience ; not that of the *heart*. Or, if the heart be affected, it is no otherwise than as a new turn is given to the operation of self-love : which, simply and absolutely considered, has no holiness in it.

Must repentance, then, be viewed under the notion of *sorrow for sin*, and *aversion to it*, considered as an opposition to divine authority, and as a contrariety to divine purity ? This, indeed, is that repentance which is connected with pardon and salvation. But then it may be justly queried, whether it was ever found in any

* Heb. vi. 18. Matt. iii. 7.

sinner before he believed in Jesus Christ : as the following considerations, perhaps, may show.

Repentance, under this notion of it, is manifestly a fruit of sincere esteem for the dominion of God, and of love to his infinite excellence. Because no one can be cordially grieved for opposing a government, which he does not esteem ; nor for his past aversion to excellence, which he does not admire. But the Scriptures will not permit our concluding, that these pious affections are possessed by sinners, before they receive the truth, and believe in Christ. If we really love and revere God, it is *because he first loved us* ; because *there is forgiveness with him* ; because that love, as expressed in the gift of his own Son, and that forgiveness, through the atonement, have been more or less revealed to us, in the glad tidings of reconciliation.—All men, when their consciences are alarmed, being pained with apprehensions of eternal destruction, will sorrow for the *consequences of sin* ; but none besides believers in Jesus mourn over and abhor its *intrinsic evil*.

Genuine sorrow for sin, and selfabasement before God, are closely connected, in ancient prophecy, with faith in the bleeding Immanuel, and with reconciliation to our offended Sovereign ; rather, they are considered as *effects* of that faith and reconciliation. For thus it is written ; *I will establish my covenant with thee ; and thou*

*shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, WHEN I AM PACIFIED TOWARD THEE for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God—I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall LOOK UPON ME whom they have pierced, and they shall MOURN for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in BITTERNESS for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. To which may be added the following words: I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely, AFTER that I was turned, I repented; and AFTER that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth *.*

Here we have genuine sorrow for sin, considered as rebellion against Jehovah's government, and as abhorrent from his purity. Here we behold a remembrance of past offences paining the conscience, and shame suffusing the cheeks; confusion producing silence and grief almost breaking the heart. Whence is it, then, that inveterate rebels are thus affected, and adamantine

* Ezek. xvi. 62, 63. Zech. xii. 10. Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

hearts thus melted? Not from denunciations of divine vengeance; nor from apprehensions of endless perdition: but from *knowing*, as taught by the *Spirit of grace*, the import of that sublime name, JEHOVAH *; from *looking* to the pierced Messiah; and from God being *reconciled* to them. Yes, not only mercy revealed to the guilty, but faith in the divine testimony, a believing regard to the dying Jesus, and conversion to God, are presented to view as producing repentance.

That the manifestation of divine benignity toward our apostate species, is friendly to holy sorrow; and that the exercise of human compassion towards disaffected neighbours, has a natural tendency to produce reformation, we are taught by the following remarkable words. *The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance—If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head* †. Are the exercise of divine kindness, in the course of common Providence, and the puny efforts of human compassion, for the relief of distressed fellow-creatures, adapted to produce repentance and reformation in their different objects? then, surely, we may conclude, that the boundless benignity of God, revealed in the gospel of our salvation, must be incomparably better fitted, to excite an

* Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. Isa. xlvi. 21.

† Rom. ii. 4. xii. 20.

abhorrence of sin, conciliate the affections to God, and produce a series of holy obedience.

Further : True repentance is the *gift* of Christ, considered as the ascended Sovereign and Saviour of his church. As it is written, *Him hath God exalted, with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins* *. Repentance and pardon, being here so intimately connected, and both of them represented as the gifts of Jesus Christ ; we are led to conclude, that real repentance for sin, and faith in the blood of Christ, coexist ; that godly sorrow supposes and includes faith in revealed mercy ; and that both of them are the fruits of sovereign grace.

Dr. OWEN, when speaking of *humiliation for sin*, expresses himself as follows. ‘ There is a respect in it to the *love of God* : and this breaks the heart of the poor returning sinner. Sorrow from the *law*, shuts itself up in the soul, and strangleth it. Sorrow from the *love of God* opens and causeth it to flow forth. Thoughts of sinning against the *love of God*, managed by the Holy Ghost, what shall I say ? their effects in the heart are not to be expressed—True humility consists more in *believing*, than in being *sensible* of sin—Let there be no mistake : there can be no *evangelical* sense

* Acts v. 31.

‘ of sin, and humiliation for it, where there is not *union*—
‘ with Christ. Zech. xii. 10—It is the soul’s appli-
‘ cation to God for *forgiveness*, and not its sense of sin,
‘ that gives unto God the glory of his grace—No repen-
‘ tance is acceptable with God, but what is built, or
‘ leans, on the faith of forgiveness—God expressly
‘ declares in the Scripture, that *the forgiveness that is*
‘ *with him*, is the foundation of his prescribing repen-
‘ tance unto man. One instance may suffice, Isa. Iv. 7
‘ —*Legal* repentance, which precedes gospel faith, and
‘ is without it, is neither a disposition, preparation, nor
‘ condition of our justification *.’

Thus Mr. JAMES HERVEY: ‘ *Repent ye, and believe the gospel!* This may be the meaning of the exhortation. ‘ *Repent*; relinquish all your wrong notions, relating to ‘ the way and manner of finding acceptance with the ‘ Deity. *Believe the gospel*; which opens a most unex-‘ pected avenue, for the communication of this blessing. ‘ Which brings you glad tidings of a salvation, fully ‘ procured by the incarnate God, and freely offered to ‘ the unworthy sinner. The word, you know, is *meta-*‘ *reōrēte*: which, in its primary signification, denotes not ‘ so much a reformation of conduct, as a change of ‘ sentiment.—Suppose it to signify a reformation of

* *On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm*, p. 54, 63, 64, 137.
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conduct ; the meaning then may be as follows. *Repent* ;
‘ forsake all your vices, and all your follies ; mortify
‘ every evil temper, and renounce every evil way. In
‘ order to render this practicable, *believe the gospel* ;
‘ wherein a Saviour is preached and displayed. Who
‘ makes peace for such offenders ; reconciles them to
‘ God ; and obtains eternal redemption for them. This
‘ will sweetly withdraw your affections from iniquity,
‘ and sweetly attach them to the blessed God. Whereas,
‘ without this powerful expedient, you will never be
‘ delivered from the pleasing witchcraft of your lusts.
‘ Sin will always have the dominion over you, so long
‘ as you are *under the law*, and not *under grace*.
‘ Repentance, thus understood, is not the *condition* of
‘ obtaining salvation, but the fruit of *salvation itself—I*
‘ *came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*.
‘ Many persons, I am apt to suspect, mistake the meaning
‘ of this sweet passage ; and turn the *freely flowing*
‘ benefits of the gospel, into the *rigorous requirements*
‘ of the law. They reckon, our Lord’s calling to
‘ repentance, is like a schoolmaster calling the youths to
‘ their task ; or like a householder calling his servants
‘ to their work. Whereas, it is like Joseph, the governor
‘ of Egypt, calling his brethren, each to receive a suit
‘ of apparel, and all to partake of his hospitable banquet.
‘ Christ, as a Saviour, is the greatest of benefactors.
‘ When, therefore, he calls to repentance, his intention
‘ is, not to demand, but to bestow ; not to enjoin, but

‘ to impart. *He is exalted*, says the Apostle, *to give repentance**.

Thus Mr. THOMAS BOSTON; ‘ The subject of true repentance is a *convinced, believing, soul*. An *unconvinc'd* sinner cannot be a true penitent; for what the eye sees not, the heart rues not. Neither can an *unbelieving* sinner be so; for without faith the heart may be rent *for sin*, but not *from it*—Faith is the spring and source of repentance: so that though the graces of faith and repentance are given together and at once, in respect of time; yet, in the order of nature, faith goes before repentance, and the acting of faith goes before the exercise of repentance: and he that would repent, must first believe in Christ, that he may repent—Then, it is not gospel doctrine, *That Christ will receive none but true penitents*; or that none but such have a warrant to embrace Christ, by faith—For sensible sinners to think that they dare not, and ought not, to believe and embrace Christ, till they be more deeply humbled, and do more thoroughly repent of their sins and, in a word, be *more fit* to receive him; is but a gilded deceit, and a trick of the false heart—The more faith, the more repentance; as, the fuller the spring is, the streams run with the more vigorous current †.’

* *Eleven Letters to Mr. J. WESLEY*, p. 114, 115. *Theiron and Aspasio*, Vol. III. p. 330, 331. *Note, Edit. 5th.*

† *Works*, p. 608, 609, 610. *Edinb. 1767.*

It is objected, ‘ Though it be not necessary for a sinner to *know* that he is born again, before he believe in Jesus Christ ; yet *regeneration itself* must precede faith. For the heart of a sinner being naturally in a state of enmity to the divine Character, he will never turn to God, while in that situation, for pardon and acceptance.’—In answer to which, the following particulars are proposed for consideration.

Before this objection can be justly considered as valid, it must be evinced, not only, that regeneration *precedes* faith ; but also that it is necessary to *authorise* a sinner’s reliance on Jesus Christ : than which, few sentiments are more foreign from the genuine gospel.

Regeneration must precede faith. This, though assumed as a certain fact, may be justly doubted : for the page of Inspiration does not warrant our supposing, that any one is born of God, *before* he believes in Jesus Christ ; or, that regeneration is effected by the Holy Spirit, *without* the word of grace. For we are taught, by the sacred Writers, to consider the word of truth, with regard to adults, as the mean of regeneration, and of many other happy effects. They teach, for instance, *That it is the instrument of enlightening the mind, of awaking the conscience, and of softening the heart.* ‘ The

* Works, p. 608, 609, 610. Edinb. 1767.

‘ entrance of thy word giveth light—The word of God
 ‘ is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged
 ‘ sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul
 ‘ and spirit, and of the joints and marrow—Is not my
 ‘ word like as fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer,
 ‘ that breaketh the rock in pieces *.’—*That is the instrument, or seed, of regeneration.* ‘ The dead shall hear
 ‘ the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall
 ‘ live—The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit,
 ‘ and they are life—In Christ Jesus I have begotten
 ‘ you through the gospel—Of his own will begat he us
 ‘ with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of
 ‘ firstfruits of his creatures—Being born again, not of
 ‘ corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of
 ‘ God, which liveth and abideth for ever †.—*That they only, who believe in Christ, are the children of God.*
 ‘ As many as received him, to them gave he power to
 ‘ become the sons of God, even to them that believe on
 ‘ his name—Ye are all the children of God by faith in
 ‘ Christ Jesus—Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the
 ‘ Christ, is born of God ‡.—*That it is the mean, in the hand of the Spirit, of conversion, of sanctification, and of salvation.* Of CONVERSION: ‘ The law of the Lord
 ‘ is perfect, converting the soul—He called you by our

* Ps. cxix. 130. Heb. iv. 12. Jer. xxiii. 29.

† John v. 25. (Vide LAMPIUM in loc.) John vi. 36. 1 Cor. iv. 15. James i. 18. 1 Pet. i. 23.

‡ John i. 12. Gal. iii. 26. 1 John v. 1.

‘ gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Of SANCTIFICATION: ‘ He that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit—Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth—That they also might be sanctified through the truth—Thanks be to God, that whereas you were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed, from the heart, the model of doctrine into which ye were delivered—The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth—Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit.’ Of SALVATION: ‘ The gospel of Christ—is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth—The engrafted word, which is able to save your souls *.’

We are further taught, *That the primitive Christians loved one another for the sake of evangelical truth.* ‘ The Elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth: and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever—The Elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.—*That they considered one another as happy,*

* Psalm xix. 7. 2 Thess. ii. 14. Matt. xiii. 23. John xvii. 17, 19. Rom. vi. 17. (See DODDRIDGE on the place.) Eph. iv. 24. (*της αληθείας.*) 1 Pet. i. 22. Rom. i. 16. James i. 17.

and rejoiced in that happiness, in proportion as they lived under the influence of divine truth. ‘ I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth—I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth—Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself *.’

Once more: *The Apostles frequently describe merely nominal Christians, and ungodly persons in general, by their not knowing, not loving, or not possessing, the truth.* ‘ They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved—That they all might be damned who believed not the truth—Men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth—if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth—Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth—if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us—if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us—He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him †.’

* 2 John i. 2, 4. 3 John i. 3, 4, 12.

† 2 Thess. ii. 10 12. 1 Tim. vi. 5. 2 Tim. ii. 25. iii. 7.

1 John i. 8, 10. ii. 4.

Such is the language of Inspiration, relative to the high importance of revealed truth, in the great plan of salvation by Jesus Christ ! Hence it appears, that few things are more evidently contained, or more strongly asserted in Scripture, than the instrumentality of divine truth in the *regeneration* of sinners. It is there described as the honoured mean, as *the seed of God* *, by which the Holy Spirit effects the regeneration, the sanctification, and the consolation of those that are saved. But it is impossible for us to conceive of the mind being enlightened, of the conscience being relieved, of the will being regulated, and of the affections being purified, by the word of truth, any further than it is believed.— I conclude, therefore, that regeneration is not, in order of time, previous to faith in Christ. Consequently, as they are the *ungodly* whom the Spirit regenerates by the truth, so persons of that character are warranted to believe in Jesus.

It is not requisite for a sinner to know that he is born again, before he believe in Jesus Christ. But, if it be a fact, that regeneration *itself* is previously necessary to faith in Christ ; whoever is persuaded of that fact, and ardently concerned about his eternal happiness, cannot forbear to investigate the state of his own soul, respecting regeneration, with much the same solicitude as if he

* 1 Pet. i. 23, 24, 25. 1 John iii. 9.

considered being born again, under the notion of his *warrant* to rely on Jesus Christ : and thus his conscience must unavoidably be embarrassed, respecting his permission to believe, until he become persuaded of his regeneration. Nay, on supposition that the heart must be renewed, previous to believing the gospel, and to any degree of dependence upon the atonement ; it seems as if sinners *ought* always to inquire into the state of their own hearts, and to have *evidence* of their being renewed by divine influence, before they can, without presumption, expect the least benefit from Jesus Christ.—I said, *without presumption*. For, according to the sentiment here opposed, it would be *presumption*—it would argue a *criminal forwardness*, in any one to rely on Christ for acceptance with God, before he perceived the marks of regeneration attending his tempers and conduct.—It is readily granted, that the hearts of sinners are, by nature, *strongly disaffected* to the divine Character ; and that, while under the power of this enmity, they are far from God. But the energy of the Spirit applying the word of reconciliation to their hearts, the truth is believed, and their enmity subdued, in the same instant. According to that saying, *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*—free, from guilt on your consciences, and from reigning enmity in your hearts.

Still further to prove and illustrate the instrumentality of divine truth, in the regeneration and sanctification of

sinners, the following quotations are pertinent. Thus Mr. CHARNOCK : ‘ We are new-created by the Spirit of God infusing faith into us—Faith is of absolute necessity to regeneration—*The gospel is the instrument whereby God brings the soul forth in a new birth.* The scripture doth distinguish the efficient and instrumental cause, by the prepositions εκ, or εξ, and δια. When we are said to be *born of the Spirit*, it is (John iii. 5.) εκ πνευματος, (1 John iii. 9.) εκ Θεου; (1 John v. 1.) never δια πνευματος, or δια Θεου: but we are no where said to be born *of the word*, or begotten *of the word*; but δια λογου, *by*, or *with*, *the word*, (1 Pet i. 23.) and δια ευαγγελιου, (1 Cor. iv. 15.) I have begotten you *through the gospel*. The preposition εκ, or εξ, usually denotes the *efficient*, or material cause; δια, the *instrument*, or means, by which a thing is wrought. Sin entered into the heart of Eve by the word of the devil; grace enters into the heart by the word of God. That entered by a word of error; this by a word of truth. *Ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you:* (John xv. 3.) whereby our Saviour means the word outwardly preached by him; for it was the word spoken by him. Not that it had this efficacy of itself, but as an instrument of their sanctification, rendering them ready to every good work. The holiness therefore which it begets, is called the *holiness of truth*: (Eph. iv. 24.) opposed to the επιφυλαι της απωλει, *lusts of deceit*, Verse the twenty-second. Lusts grow up from

‘ error and deceit ; and holiness of the new man grows up from truth—If the Spirit quicken, [or excite spiritual diligence,] it is by some gospel precept ; if it comforts, it is by some gospel promise ; if it startles, it is by some threatening in the word : whatsoever working there is in a Christian’s heart, it is by some word dropping upon it—The Spirit makes the word, not only the fire to kindle the soul, but the bellows to blow : it is first life, then liveliness to the soul. It is through the word he begets us, and through the word he quickens us : *Thy word hath quickened me.* It is by the word God gathers a church in the world ; by the same word he sanctifies it to greater degrees. (Eph. v. 26.) It is the seed whereby we are born ; the dew whereby we are refreshed. As it is the seed of our birth, so it is the milk of our growth, 1 Pet. ii. 2*.

Thus Dr. OWEN : ‘ This [regeneration] is wrought by the word. 1 Pet. i. 23. *We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.* Wherein, not only the thing itself, of our regeneration by the word, but the manner of it also, is declared. It is by the collation of a new spiritual life upon us, whereof the word is the seed. As every life proceeds from some seed, that hath in itself virtually the whole life to be educed from it, by natural ways

* Works, Vol. II, p. 43, 509, 155, 158. Edit. 2d.

‘ and means ; so the word in the hearts of men, is turned
 ‘ into a vital principle, that, cherished by suitable means,
 ‘ puts forth vital acts and operations. By this means
 ‘ we are *born of God*, and quickened, who *by nature*,
 ‘ *are children of wrath; dead in trespasses and sins*. So
 ‘ Paul tells the Corinthians, that he had *begotten them*,
 ‘ *in Jesus Christ, by the gospel*—It is the instrument of
 ‘ God for this end ; and mighty and powerful, through
 ‘ God, it is for the accomplishment of it *.’

The same excellent Author, when speaking of *sanc-*
tification by the truth, says : ‘ There is a great answer-
 ‘ bleness and correspondency, between the *heart* of a
 ‘ believer, and the *truth* that he doth believe. As the
 ‘ word is in the gospel, so is grace in the heart : yea,
 ‘ they are the *same thing* variously expressed. (Rom. vi.
 ‘ 17.) *You have obeyed from the heart, εις ον παρεδοθε*
τινον σιδαχν, the form of doctrine delivered unto you.
 ‘ As our Translation doth not, so I know not how, in
 ‘ so few words, to express that which is *emphatically* here
 ‘ insinuated by the Holy Ghost. The meaning is, that
 ‘ the doctrine of the gospel begets the *form, figure,*
 ‘ *image, or likeness* of itself, in the hearts of them that
 ‘ believe. So they are cast into the *mould* of it. As is
 ‘ the one, so is the other. The principle of *grace* in
 ‘ the heart, and that in the *word*, are the children of

* *On Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4. p. 178.*

‘ the same parent, completely resembling and representing one another. Grace is a *living word*, and the word is *figured, limned grace*. As is regeneration, so is a regenerate heart: as is the doctrine of faith, so is a believer. And this gives great evidence unto, and assurance of the things believed—First, the *truth is in Jesus*: then it is expressed in the word. This word, learned and believed, becomes grace in the heart, every way answering unto the Lord Christ his *image*, from whom this *transforming truth* did thus proceed. Nay, this is carried by the Apostle yet higher, namely, unto God the Father himself, whose image Christ is, and believers his, through the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. iv. 6 —Regeneration doth not, in order of time, precede the soul’s interest in the forgiveness that is with God, or its being made partaker of the pardon of sin. I say no more but that it doth not precede it in order of time; not determining which hath precedence in order of nature. That, I confess, which the method of the gospel leads unto, is, That absolution, acquitment, or the pardon of sin, is *the foundation* of the communication of all saving grace unto the soul; and so *precedeth* all grace in the sinner whatever—It is hence evident, that an assurance of being regenerate, is no way previously necessary unto the believing of an interest in forgiveness; so that although a man have not the former, it is, or may be, his duty to endeavour the latter. When convinced persons cried out, *What*

'*Shall we do to be saved?* the answer was, *Believe, and you shall be so.* Believe in Christ, and in the remission of sin by his blood, is the *first* thing that convinced sinners are called unto. They are not directed first to secure their souls that *they are born again*, and then afterwards to believe. But they are first to believe, that the remission of sin is tendered to them in the blood of Christ ; and that by him they may be justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law. Nor, upon this proposition, is it the duty of men to question whether they have faith, or no, but actually to believe : and faith, in its operation, will evidence itself. See *Acts xiii. 38, 39* *.'

Again, he says : 'The whole matter of sanctification and holiness is peculiarly joined with, and limited unto, the *doctrine, truth, and grace* of the gospel : for holiness is nothing, but the implanting, writing, and realising of the gospel in our souls. Hence it is termed *σωτηρία της αληθείας*, (Eph. iv. 24.) *The holiness of truth* ; which the truth of the gospel ingenerates, and which consists in a conformity thereunto : and the gospel itself is *αληθεία η κατ' ευαγγελία*, (Tit. i. 1.) *The truth which is according to godliness* ; which declares that godliness and holiness which God requireth. The prayer also of our Saviour, for our sanctification, is

* *On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm*, p. 160, 161, 339, 340.

‘ conformed thereunto, (John xvii. 17.) *Sanctify them*
 ‘ *in (or by) thy truth; thy word is truth:* and he sanctified himself for us, to be a sacrifice, that we *might be*
 ‘ *sainted in the truth.* This alone is that *truth* which
 ‘ makes us free; (John viii. 12.) that is, from sin and
 ‘ the law, unto righteousness in holiness. It belongs
 ‘ neither to nature, nor the law, so as to proceed from
 ‘ them, or to be effected by them—There neither is,
 ‘ nor ever was in the world, nor ever shall be, the least
 ‘ dram of holiness, but what, flowing from Jesus Christ,
 ‘ is communicated by the Spirit, according to the *truth*
 ‘ *and promise* of the gospel. There may be something
 ‘ *like* it, as to its outward acts and effects, (at least, some
 ‘ of them;) something that may wear its livery in the
 ‘ world, that is but the fruit of men’s own endeavours,
 ‘ in compliance with their convictions; but *holiness* it is
 ‘ not, nor of the same kind or nature with it *.’

Respecting the word of truth as the instrument of regeneration, it has, to the following purpose, been objected: ‘ They who consider divine truth as the mean of regeneration must grant, that it is by the Holy Spirit the word is introduced into the mind, in order to its having such an effect—That some operation of

* *Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit*, B. IV. Chap. i. § 8.
 See Mr. T. SCOTT’s *Essays on the most Important Subjects in Religion*, p. 21.

' the Spirit on the understanding takes place, in order
' so to *change* it, as to receive the word—And, that
' this operation *precedes* the entrance of light into the
' mind. Consequently, that the *change* by which the
' mind is prepared to receive the light, is not effected
' by means of the word: and yet, in that very change
' men are *born of the Spirit**.'

According to this view of the subject, the word of truth, having no influence, is *of no use*, in the work of regeneration; the salutary and important change being produced entirely without it. Either, therefore, by those expressions, *born again*, the objector must intend something very different from what is meant by them in Scripture; or he is not far from contradicting the express determination of inspired Writers: as appears by various passages already adduced—To imagine that a preparation of the *mind*, merely to receive the truth, is a change so great as to answer those emphatical expressions, *regeneration*, *born again*, *born of the Spirit*, *born of God*, and *a new heart*; is, I think, very unwarrantable. Because, on that supposition, the change denoted by being *born of the Spirit*, takes place merely in the *intellect*, or thinking faculty; not at all in the *will*, or the *heart*. But, whatever light any person may have in his mind, the Scriptures never teach us to consider

* Mr. S. HOPKINS's *Two Discourses*, p. 112, 113.

him as *born of the Spirit*, except his heart be renewed, so as to love God and approve of his ways. Nay, the Author himself confirms my assertion, by elsewhere saying; ‘ This regeneration of which I am speaking consists in a change of the *will*, or *heart*—I have good grounds to assert, that in regeneration the *will*, or *heart* is the *immediate subject* of the divine operation, and so of the moral change that is effected thereby *.’ *Though I—understand all mysteries, and all knowledge,—and have not love, I am nothing.* The glorious God, however, is not loved by apostate creatures, unless as revealed in Jesus Christ, and by the gospel.

It is too hastily assumed, that the mind is *prepared* to receive the light of spiritual knowledge, previous to the truth having any influence upon it. For, may not the Holy Spirit, without any antecedent operation, apply divine truth, or the sense and meaning of the word; so as to enlighten the understanding, impress the conscience, and affect the heart? May not that omnipotent Agent, without any previous preparation, attend his own word with such energy, as to irradiate the mind, subdue the will, and give a new turn to the whole soul? Nay, do not the scriptural passages already produced, naturally lead us to conclude, that this, with regard to regeneration, is a fact? If there be not an aptitude in the word of

truth, as an instrument in the hand of God, to produce this great moral change, why is that word compared to *light*, called a *two-edged sword*, and represented as giving *life*? When the Apostle says, *I had not known sin but by the law*; and, *the law worketh wrath**; does he not intend to inform us, that the divine precepts, and their awful sanction, are *means* by which the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, and alarms the conscience? So, when David says, *Thy word hath quickened me*; and when our Lord prays, *Sanctify them through thy truth*†; must we not consider them as teaching, that the word of grace is the mean of producing comfort, and of promoting holiness? When Paul speaks of life and immortality being *brought to light by (dia) the gospel*; and of Gentiles being made partakers of *the promise in Christ by the gospel*‡; does he not intend to represent the doctrine of redemption by Jesus Christ, as the *great mean* by which that light, and this promise, came to be enjoyed by us? Why, then, should we affix a different sense to similar language, respecting the work of regeneration, in the texts before adduced, from the writings of Paul, of James, and of Peter? Why, when the word of truth, or the gospel of divine grace, is represented as that by which sinners are *born again*—as the *very seed* of regeneration—should the words receive a qualified interpre-

* Rom. vii. 7. iv. 15. † Psalm cxix. 50. John xvii. 17, 19. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 10. Eph. iii. 6.

tation ; so as to mean something, which the Author to whom I advert does not consider as regeneration, *properly* so called ?—To be *of the truth*; to be *of faith*; and to be *of God**; are various forms of expression, to exhibit the same spiritual character in different points of light. Is any one represented as *of God*? he is to be viewed as *born of the Spirit*. Is he said to be *of faith*? we must regard him as *believing in Jesus*. Is he described as *of the truth*? we must consider him as having *received the gospel*, and as living under its influence. But, according to the objection under our notice, a person may be *of God*, yet neither be *of faith*, nor *of the truth*.

Besides, for an awakened sinner to be persuaded, that regeneration is prior to faith in Jesus, and that it is effected without the instrumentality of divine truth; is adapted to give an injurious direction to his *prayers* and his *expectations*, respecting that affair. The *former*: because if he pray agreeably to that idea, it will be for something under the notion of regeneration, in which the knowledge of Christ, and a regard to his atonement, have no concern. Consequently, for something which leaves him at a distance from wisdom, and from happiness.—The *latter*: because, neglecting the testimony

* John xviii. 37. 1 John iii. 19. Gal. iii. 9. John viii. 47. 1 John iii. 10. iv. 3, 6. v. 19. 3 John 11.

of God concerning Jesus, he will be ready to look for some secret, and enthusiastical impulse, to produce the important change. Two evils, these, of no small consequence, in whomsoever they are found.

Once more: This Author himself, I think, must admit, that Satan laid the foundation of his kingdom among men, by the use of language replete with infernal falsehood. But, if so, it cannot be absurd to maintain, that the spiritual dominion of Christ, in the hearts of sinners, commences under the salutary operation of divine truth. If the father of lies, by words of deceit, without any previous physical influence on the mental powers, polluted the imagination, obscured the understanding, and corrupted the heart of Eve, when in her primitive state, and under a strong bias to obedience; which, I presume, this Writer will acknowledge: why should he deny, that the Holy Spirit, by the word of truth, without any preparatory agency on the foul, enlightens the mind, impresses the conscience, and gives a new turn to the heart, of one that is dead in sin?

That our first parents, in their innocent state, were under a powerful predilection for whatever was morally right, must be allowed; except we deny their being created in a state of complete rectitude: and that no divine agency upon their minds, or their will, was employed to produce a compliance with Satan's temp-

tation, must be granted ; unless the Most Holy be impiously considered as the author of sin. The propensities of their nature, therefore, in favour of communion with God, and of obedience to him, we may justly conclude, were not less powerful than those in the hearts of their degenerate offspring are, to objects quite the reverse. Consequently, as the first inclination to evil, in the human heart, when perfectly pure, was produced, without any previous physical influence, by the lie of Satan ; we are led, by analogy, equally as by the language of Scripture, to consider the first holy tendency, in a heart that is totally corrupt, as produced by the truth of God, without any preparatory agency.

This argument from analogy is the more observable, as it arises from the only fact of the kind, that ever did, or ever will take place among men. It may be rendered more conclusive, however, by remarking; that though the Scriptures teach us to consider depravity as first produced in the holy hearts of our paradisiacal progenitors, *merely* by the operation of Satan's falsehood; yet the same infallible Writings lead us to conclude, that evangelical truth is only the *mean* of renewing depraved hearts, or of turning them to God. Were it demonstrated, therefore, that the vigour of holy tendencies, in the pure nature of our original parents, was much less than that of depravity, in the hearts of their posterity ; we might, nevertheless, adopt a principal of rea-

soning, repeatedly employed in the writings of Paul, and say : If the language of deceit, from the lying lips of Satan, without any previous influence, was capable of corrupting an holy heart, and of producing actual disobedience ; *much more** is divine truth, in the hand of the Sacred Spirit, able to renew depraved hearts, and to produce a course of obedience.

The Author to whom I refer, still further objects ;
 ‘ There must be knowledge and approbation of the divine character and law, and a sight and sense of the ill desert of sin, before there can be any true knowledge of the Mediator and faith in him—It is certain to a demonstration, that they who are not heartily reconciled to God and his law ; and do not hate sin, or abhor themselves for it, do not know, and are not reconciled to the grace of God through Christ : nor can they attain to the latter, if not first brought to the former ; but will remain eternally enemies to both †.’
 —Here we have, if I mistake not, various ungarded assertions, which corrupt the gospel, and have a pernicious tendency.

There must be knowledge of the divine character, before there can be any true knowledge of the Mediator. But

* Rom. v. 9, 10, 15, 17. Heb. ix. 13, 14.

† Mr. Hockin’s “The Difference,” p. 24, 25. Note.

whence is that knowledge of the divine character to be derived? From the glad tidings of salvation? That is contrary to the principle on which this Author manifestly here proceeds. For, according to his theology, the divine character must be known and approved, before the gospel be either known or understood—before we have the least spiritual acquaintance with Jesus, or any dependence on his atoning death, for pardon and peace. This, however, is apparently contrary to the following divine declarations. *No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son WILL REVEAL HIM—The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, HE HATH DECLARED HIM—To give the knowledge of the glory of God, IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST—We all, in an unveiled face*, beholding as in a glass THE GLORY OF THE LORD, are changed into the same image†.* These infallible sayings plainly denote, that the divine character neither is, nor can be known by us, except as revealed in the Person and work of our great Mediator. But, were the position on which I animadvert founded in fact, we should have little occasion for the glad tidings of salvation, and the death of Jesus, in order to learn the true character of God.

* απακτηλυμένω προσωπω.

† Matt. xi. 27. John i. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 6. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Whence, then, if not from the doctrine of redemption, is the knowledge under consideration to be derived? Not, surely, from the works of *creation*, and of *common Providence*. For then, with the ancient Heathens, we must seek the *Lord*, if haply we may feel after him, like men groping in darkness, that we may *find him**.—Or, must sinners, by studying the absolute purity, the extensive demands, and the tremendous curse of Jehovah's law, become acquainted with the divine character? This, indeed, seems to be our Author's meaning: and it is readily granted, that the true nature of the law being well understood, furnishes, *in certain respects*, a knowledge of the divine character. For, by that system of moral duty, and its penal sanction, we are informed of the absolute dominion, the flaming purity, and the punishing justice of God. These, however, constitute only a *part* of his character: and we must either know more of his peerless excellence, and supreme perfection, than the law reveals, or have neither confidence in him, nor peace of conscience—neither hope, nor holiness.

The character of God which must be known, in order to our present sanctification and future happiness, reveals much more of his eternal excellence than is displayed in the moral precepts, and in their awful sanction. For they who are not acquainted with this character,

* Acts xvii. 27.

except so far as the violated law has taught them ; have no more knowledge of it than Adam had, immediately after his first offence, and before divine mercy was revealed. Our original father, at that unhappy moment, knew enough of his Maker's character to fill him with terror, and to drive him from the divine presence ; but nothing at all that excited esteem or veneration, confidence or love ; nor yet repentance, or genuine sorrow for sin, and self-abasement before his affronted Sovereign. For we find that he, and his partner in disobedience, were thoroughly disposed, had it been in their power, to have exculpated themselves, by charging the blame upon others. *The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree—The serpent beguiled me—* were their pleas ; without any confession of guilt, or any petition for pardon. Having no knowledge of the divine character, besides that which suited the law of their creation, and their slate of innocence, they could have no hope, till mercy was revealed : and, among sinners, where there is *no* hope, there is *no* holiness—*no abhorrence of sin, as to its intrinsic evil; nor any genuine self-abasement before God.* ‘For, a sense of religion, ‘without hope, is a state of phrenzy and distraction ; ‘void of all inducements to love and obedience *.’

* Bp. SHERLOCK's *Use and Intent of Prophecy*, p. 69. London,
1726.

It is in virtue of *evangelical truth*, of *gracious promises*, and of *hope*, that the hearts of sinners are sanctified. For thus it is written ; *Ye have PURIFIED your souls in obeying THE TRUTH, through the Spirit—Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises : that BY THESE ye might be partakers of the divine nature—Having THESE PROMISES, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God—We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is : and every man that hath this HOPE in him, PURIFIETH HIMSELF, even as he is pure**— Does the most holy bestow any measure of sanctifying influence on depraved creatures ? it is because there is *forgiveness with him, and as the God of peace.* For thus the Apostle prays ; *The very God of peace, or the God of peace himself, sanctify you wholly †.* But, under that amiable character, he does not appear, except as *in Christ*, and as *reconciling the world unto himself ‡.*—We may safely conclude, therefore, that he whose knowledge of the divine character is derived merely from the law, knows little more of the glorious God than may be learned from what is denominated, *Natural Religion* ; and is far from having, either that profound respect for him, of which this Author speaks, or any degree of confidence in him. We are assured, however, that

* 1 Peter. i. 22. 2 Pet. i. iv. 2 Cor. vii. 1. 1 John. iii. 2, 3. † 1 Theff. v. 23. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 19.

confidence in God is connected with a knowledge of his character. For thus it is written ; *They that know thy Name will put their trust in thee**.

In what manner, then, is the character of God represented by the pen of Infallibility, so as to exhibit encouragement for sinners to trust in him ? Thus THE ETERNAL proclaims his most sublime Name, and explains its comprehensive import : *JEHOVAH passed by before him, and proclaimed, JEHOVAH, JEHOVAH, GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty†.* Here the Most High appears, as it were, in person, professedly to publish the import of his own most glorious Name ; that Name, for the sake of which he pardons offences, and performs his promises ; that Name, for the honour of which he dispenses the richest blessings on his chosen people, and inflicts the most awful punishments on his hardened enemies‡.—Again, the King Eternal says, *There is no God else besides me ; A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR ; there is none besides me.*

* Psalm ix. 10.

† Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. See Chap. xxxiii. 18, 19.

‡ Psalm xxv. 11. xxxi. 3. lxxix. 9. cix. 21. cxliii. 11. Isaiah xlvi. 9, 11. Ezek. xxxvi. 21. Numb. xiv. 17, 18. Psalm cxv. 1. Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 23. Joshua vii. 9. Ezek. xx. 9.

*Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.** Now, in these ancient oracles, which expressly declare the divine character, that character appears to be as rich with sovereign grace, as it is bright with eternal holiness ; and as alluring with pardoning mercy as it is tremendous with punishing justice. But where, except in the cross of Christ, are the grace and holiness, the mercy and justice of God, united and realised, according to the venerable import of these characters ? Or how, except by the doctrine of redemption, shall we behold the cross of Christ, as exhibiting the divine character ? Such, however, is that Name, by which the Great Invisible will be known by all his people : under which Name, he will be trusted and loved, adored and obeyed.

The following declarations also, enter deeply into the divine character, as revealed to the ancient Jewish church. *Thou art a God of pardons ; gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness—There is forgiveness with Thee that thou mayest be feared :* and it is with a direct view to the divine character as thus described, that the people of God are heard, in a transport of joy, to exclaim ; *Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because*

* *Isaiah xlvi. 21, 22.*

he DELIGHTETH in mercy *.—Thus is the infinite God characterised in the Old Testament: nor can we suppose that his essential goodness, and pardoning mercy, are less conspicuous in the New. No: there he is characterised, *The Father of mercies—the God of all grace—the God of love—the God of hope—and the God of peace* †. Nay, *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, gives the divine character in two single words. To denote the glory of supreme *holiness*, he says, *God is LIGHT*: and, most emphatically to express the infinitude of divine *goodness*, he says, once and again, *God is LOVE* ‡. In each of these delightful and comprehensive sayings, the Apostle has a direct regard to those discoveries which the Eternal has made of himself in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ.—*God is LIGHT: God is LOVE*. These two ideas united, constitute a character supremely beautiful, and supremely venerable—a character, which encourages confidence, excites hope, and commands reverence. This character expresses, in the most sublime and concise manner, the import of those ancient oracles already produced, from the writings of Moses, and of Isaiah. *They that know God, as thus revealed, will put their trust in him.*

* Nehem. ix. 17. (Margin). Psalm cxxx. 4. Micah. viii. 18.

† 2 Cor. i. 3. Rom. xvi. 20. Heb. xiii. 20. 1 Pet. v. 10. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Rom. xv. 13.

‡ 1 John i. 5. iv. 8, 16.

Sinners must approve the divine character—must be heartily reconciled to God and his law ; before they can be reconciled to the grace of God through Christ. But, if they be so reconciled, previous to believing in Jesus, and to a view of revealed mercy, it should seem as if they had not much occasion for either faith, or grace, or Christ. Because it must be admitted, that persons of such piety are already accepted of God, bear his image, and are in the way to heaven. A small degree of assistance from Christ, and from grace, may be necessary, perhaps, to *expedite* their progress in the heavenly road ; on which, without regarding sovereign mercy and atoning blood, they have so happily entered ; and to render them a little more *comfortable* under the afflictions with which they meet. But, certainly, as they already approve the divine character, and have made such advances in sanctification ; they cannot believe in Christ as justifying the *ungodly*, nor consider themselves as entirely unworthy. Because, on a comparison with unregenerate persons, who have always constituted a vast majority of mankind, their moral worth is very great. For they who *approve* the divine character, and are *heartily* reconciled to God and his law, must be viewed by all the world, as the *cordial friends*, and the *willing servants* of God.—On the principles of this Author, therefore, we may safely assert, that their hearts are holy, their character honourable, and their state secure, without any dependence on sovereign grace,

and without believing in the great Mediator : so that they are actually in the way to heaven, without regarding either grace, or Christ. Eternal election does not more firmly ascertain the future holiness of its objects, than being ‘ *heartily reconciled to God in his law*,’ secures the everlasting felicity of all those to whom that character belongs. Because, being so reconciled, they are in possession of that *holiness*, without which, *no one shall see the Lord* : and, consequently, in a state of preparation for the heavenly world. There is not, there cannot be any more danger of God abandoning those to everlasting perdition, who are become his cordial friends; than there is of his reversing the decree of election. Are multitudes of our species under a divine curse? it is as *rebels* against God, as habitually *disapproving* of his character, and as *disaffected* to his law. Are numbers consigned over to final ruin? it is as *enemies* to God, as *hat ing* his character, and as *averse* to his government. For, as a certain writer says, ‘ Nothing that loves God can perish.’

Nor, on our Author’s principles, is it only in a *future* state, that the characters under consideration are sure of blessedness. For, previous to any reliance, either on divine grace, or on Jesus Christ; and even before they are *permitted* to rely on the one or the other; they must have a considerable degree of true happiness. Because it seems impossible for any reasonable creature to

really miserable, wherever he exist, while he ‘*approves*’ the divine character, and is *heartily reconciled* to God ‘and his law.’ For such an one *voluntarily sanctifies* the name, the perfection, the government of God*. He sincerely unites with saints on earth, and with angels in heaven, in loving and adoring the Supreme. As a sincere approbation of the character and government of God is, in every stage of our existence, essential to human happiness; and as, wherever, in the wide creation, such an holy approbation is more or less wanting, there is a proportional degree of guilt and misery; so happiness is, by divine constitution, attached to that approbation, and must attend the person who ‘is *heartily reconciled* to God and his law.’—Nor is this the language of mere theory: for every believer knows by experience, that, whatever his afflictions and trials may be, he always feels himself happy, when conscious of his being ‘ heartily reconciled to God and his law.’ While that is the case, he imitates our Perfect Pattern; and his language is, *Not my will, but thine be done.* But the supposition of any one so approving the divine character, being so reconciled to the government of God, and *sanctifying the Lord God in his heart*, before he believes the gracious gospel, or depends on Jesus Christ, is an opinion absolutely unfounded.

* Lev. x. 3. Isa. viii. 13. xxix. 23. 1 Pet. iii. 15.

The reason of an holy disposition, or a virtuous turn of heart, being requisite, previous to faith in Jesus Christ, is thus expressed. ‘ The necessity of the sinner’s exercising virtue, antecedent to his justification, and in order to it, is not because he needs any worthiness of his own, or can have any ; but because by this alone can his heart be so united to the Mediator, as to be the proper ground of his being looked upon and treated as so far One with him, as that his merit and righteousness may be properly imputed to him, or reckoned in his favour, so as to avail for his pardon and justification *.’

That the principle which I oppose has a natural tendency to feed self-righteous hope, in the heart of a formalist, and to harass the awakened sinner with desponding fear, has been already observed. This pernicious tendency principally arises, from its corrupting the doctrine of justification before God. For, under the influence of this anti-evangelical sentiment, our Author very plainly maintains, That something besides the righteousness of Christ, as revealed in the gospel, and freely imputed to him that believes, is absolutely necessary to justification. That *something*, he tells us, is *virtue*, and the *exercise* of it—to an *eminent* degree ; as we have seen under the last objection. This virtue he expressly pronounces necessary, *antecedent*, and *in order* to justification. But if so, the Most High does

* MR. S. HOPKINS’S *Two Discourses*, p. 32, 33. Note.

not, as Paul represents him, justify the *ungodly* *. No : it is the sinner as become truly *virtuous*, or as possessed of moral worth.—In strong contradiction to himself, however, this Writer says ; Not that the sinner ‘ *needs* any worthiness of his own, or can have any.’ But, is nothing to be called *worthiness*, which does not enable a man to claim acceptance with God, as a *legal debt*? Or is he ashamed of the term *worthiness*, while he retains the thing ? For what is the *exercise of virtue* ? what is an *approbation* of the divine character ? what is an *hearty reconciliation* to God and his law, but moral *worthiness* ? Whatever our Author may think or say of these things, the generality of others, I doubt not, will consider them as exceedingly amiable, as morally excellent, as worthy the greatest saint, and as highly approved by the Most Holy.—While this Author utterly renounces the doctrine of Roman Catholics, respecting the merit of *condignity* † ; he seems to approve their notion of merit, with regard to *congruity*. That notion, however, was held in detestation by our old Protestant writers, both Lutherans and Calvinists, as inimical to the doctrine of Scripture ; and is deservedly exploded by the *Thirteenth Article* of the Church of England.

It is ONLY by the exercise of this virtue, that the heart of a sinner can be so united to Christ, as to be the ground of

* Rom. iv. 5.

† *Two Discourses*, p. 30, 31. Note.

his righteousness being imputed, for pardon and justification. The only ground, then, on which our Lord's obedience can be imputed to sinners, is,—not their having been *chosen* in him, before the foundation of the world; not his *relation* to them, under the character of a substitute; nor the *vicarious* nature of his perfect work; but, their own *virtue*, their excellent *moral qualities*, or the *goodness* of their own hearts in cleaving to Jesus Christ! Yes, they having the *virtue* to esteem Christ, God has the *benignity* to love them. But, as their virtue is not quite complete, he, to manifest his delight in virtue, and to supply its imperfections, grants them the benefit of our Lord's imputed righteousness. Thus our own obedience becomes a pedestal, on which the righteousness of Christ may stand exalted; and whence, having such an excellent basis, it appears to great advantage! For, according to this dogma, it is by the co-operation of human worthiness, and of divine grace, that sinners obtain both pardon and justification.

Never, to the best of my recollection, did I meet with a more palpable corruption of that capital article, *Justification before God*, by any writer who did not explode the doctrine of imputed righteousness, than that in the words to which I refer! The doctrine of our Author, in this respect, is indeed too nearly akin to that of the Schoolmen, and of the council of Trent. For thus Dr. OWEN, relative to the Popish doctrine of acceptance

with God. ‘ This [first] justification, they say, is by
‘ *faith*; the obedience and satisfaction of Christ being
‘ the only meritorious cause thereof.’ Only they dispute
‘ many things about *preparations* for it, and *dispositions*
‘ unto it. Under those terms the council of Trent
‘ included the doctrine of the Schoolmen about *meritum*
‘ *de congruo**.—Thus, also, Mr. JAMES HERVEY,
when addressing Mr. J. WESLEY: ‘ What can be meant
‘ by, *Christ shall profit you nothing, if he be circumcised?*
‘ If ye make circumcision, or any thing whatever,
‘ besides the righteousness of Christ, necessary to your
‘ acceptance with God, ye shall receive no advantage
‘ from all that the Redeemer has done and suffered.
‘ This is to halt between works and grace, between
‘ Christ and self: and such divided regards, he will
‘ interpret as an affront, rather than an acceptable homage;
‘ Indeed, this is, in Christians, the grand apostacy.
‘ By this they deny the sufficiency of their Saviour’s
‘ most consummate righteousness—and must expect no
‘ salvation, but by doing the whole law.—*If any one say,*
‘ *that man is justified only by the imputation of Christ’s*
‘ *righteousness, or only by the remission of sins, WITHOUT*
‘ **THE CO-OPERATION OF INHERENT GRACE AND HOLY**
‘ **LOVE, let him be accursed.** Thus dogmatizes, and
‘ thus anathematizes, that Mother of falsehoods,

* *Doctrine of Justification*, Chap. V. Vide CHEMNITIUM, Exam.
Concil. Trident. p. 156.

‘ [the Church of Rome, in the Council of Trent.]
 ‘ Choose now your side. For my part, I renounce
 ‘ and abjure the proud and iniquitous decree. If you
 ‘ persist in your present opinion, there will be an apparent
 ‘ harmony between yourself and Rome, but an essential
 ‘ difference between yourself and Aspasio *.’

The necessity of the sinner’s exercising virtue, ANTECEDENT to his justification, and IN ORDER to it; and so on. How contrary this to the language of Inspiration, relative to a sinner’s acceptance with God ! of which the following passages are a specimen. ‘ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself : God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are—The Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to ME A SINNER.* I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. ‘ For every one that exalteth himself,’ by pleading his own virtuous exercises, ‘ shall be abased ; and he who humbleth himself,’ by sincerely confessing that he is absolutely unworthy, and by casting himself at the feet of sovereign mercy, ‘ shall be exalted—I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ;—for therein is the righteousness of God revealed,’ not from one exercise of virtue to another, but ‘ from faith to faith—The righteousness of

* *Eleven Letters to Mr. J. WESLEY, p. 62, 256.*

‘ God without the law,’ which requires the exercise of virtue, is manifested—even the righteousness of God; ‘ which is,’ not by virtue, but ‘ by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe—Being justified,’ not as exercising virtue, but ‘ FREELY by his GRACE—‘ That he might be just, and the justifier,’ not of him that is virtuous, but ‘ of him that believeth in Jesus,’ all sinful as he is. ‘ Where is boasting then? It is excluded. ‘ By what law? of works, or virtue? Nay, but by the law,’ or doctrine ‘ of faith. Therefore we conclude, ‘ that a man is justified without the deeds of the law,’ or the exercise of virtue—‘ If Abraham was justified by ‘ works,’ or thro’ the co-operation of his own virtuous exercises, ‘ he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. ‘ For what faith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, ‘ and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to ‘ him that worketh,’ in the exercise of moral virtue, ‘ is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But ‘ to him that *worketh not*,’ nor is distinguished by virtuous exercises; ‘ but believeth on him that justifieth the *UN-* ‘ *GODLY*,’ and therefore entirely destitute of all true virtue; ‘ his faith is counted for righteousness. Even ‘ as David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto ‘ whom God imputeth righteousness *WITHOUT works*,’ or virtuous exercises of the heart and life: ‘ Saying, ‘ Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and ‘ whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin—If they which are of the

‘ law,’ or of moral virtue, ‘ be heirs, faith is made
 ‘ void, and the promise of none effect—Therefore it is,
 not of moral virtue, but ‘ of faith, that it might be by
 ‘ grace,’ independent of our own virtue ; to the end the
 ‘ promise might be sure to all the seed—As many as are
 ‘ of the works of the law,’ or of moral virtue, ‘ are
 ‘ under the curse—What things were gain to me, those
 ‘ I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I
 ‘ count all things but loss for the excellency of the
 ‘ knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I
 ‘ have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them
 ‘ but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him,
 ‘ not having mine own righteousness,’ or moral virtue,
 ‘ which is of the law ; but that which is through the
 ‘ faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of
 ‘ God by faith—The Gentiles which followed not after
 ‘ righteousness ;’ were not concerned about moral virtue;
 ‘ have received* righteousness, even the righteousness
 ‘ which is by faith. But Israel, which followed after
 ‘ the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law
 ‘ of righteousness. Wherefore ? Because they sought
 ‘ it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law ;’
 or in the exercise of moral virtue, and by obedience to
 ceremonial institutes †.

* Κατελαβε, apprehenderunt. Vulgate, MONTANUS, GROTIUS.

† Luke xviii. 11—14. Rom. i. 16, 17. iii. 21—28. iv. 2—16. Gal. iii. 10. Philip iii. 8, 9. Rom. ix. 30, 31. 32.

A little to illustrate the last of these passages, it may be observed; That though our Translators have used the word *attained*, in each member of the contrast here formed; the original terms employed by the Apostle are *different*, and must in this connection have different meanings. The Jews *followed after the law of righteousness*; they earnestly sought acceptance with God by their own obedience. But, notwithstanding all their exertions, they did *not attain* (*οὐκ εφθάσατε*) to the law of righteousness; or to righteousness and justification by the law. Whereas the *Gentiles*, being enveloped in ignorance, and sunk in sensuality, *followed not after righteousness*; had little or no concern about acceptance with God, and righteousness for that purpose. But, though thus inattentive to their immortal interests, they have *received*, (*κατέλαβετε*) as a free gift *, that righteousness which the gospel reveals †, even *the righteousness which is by faith*.—To *attain* righteousness, denotes *desire*, *design*, *exertion*, for that end. These, Paul informs us, the Gentiles had not: and therefore he uses a word answering to the term *received*. The Jews *desired* righteousness, *aimed* at righteousness, *pursued* righteousness, and succeeded not: the Apostle, therefore, employs terms corresponding to the words, *attained not* ‡.

* Rom. v. 17.

† Rom. i. 16, 17.

‡ Οὐκ εφθάσατε. Thus BEZA on the text: ‘*Quæ non se&t;abantur. τα μὲν δ’ ἀκοντα. Ubi igitur opera præparationis?*—Gentes enim non modo non se&t;abantur legem justitiae, sed etiam eam

‘ Nothing,’ says Dr. OWEN, ‘ seems to be more contrary unto reason, than what is here made manifest by the event. The Gentiles who lived in sin and pleasure, not once endeavouring to attain unto any righteousness before God, yet attained unto it upon the preaching of the gospel. Israel, on the other hand, which followed after righteousness, diligently in all the works of the law and duties of obedience unto God thereby, came short of it, attained not unto it. All preparations, all dispositions, all merits, as unto righteousness and justification, are excluded from the Gentiles. For in all of them there is, more or less, a following after righteousness; which is denied of them all. Only by faith in Him who justifieth the ungodly, they attain righteousness, or they attained the righteousness of faith. For to attain righteousness by faith, and to attain the righteousness of faith, are the same thing. Wherefore, all things that are comprised any way in following

‘ fugiebatque illi bellum indixerant.’ With this, his Note on 1 Tim. i. 13. may be compared; where, among other things, he says, ‘ En merita præparationis quæ profert Apostolus!—*Misericordiā sum donatus, ἀλενθρε.* Hoc non video quâ possis Latinè, servato ordine, passivo verbo, explicare: nam *miseratus nonnisi activè dicitur.* VULGATA, *Misericordiam Dei consecutus sum*—ERASMUS, *Misericordiam adeptus sum.* Neutra interpretatione mihi satis placuit. Dicimur enim ea *consequi et adiungendi quæ captamu.* At Paulus Christum non modò non quærebat, sed etiam crudelissime persequebatur? Vide CALVINUM in loc.

‘ after righteousness, such as are all our duties and works,
‘ are excluded from any influence into our justification.
‘ And this is expressed to declare the sovereignty and
‘ freedom of the grace of God herein ; namely, that we
‘ are justified *freely by his grace*, and that on our part all
‘ boasting is excluded. Let men pretend what they
‘ will, and dispute what they please, those who attain
‘ unto righteousness and justification before God, when
‘ they *follow not after righteousness* ; they do it by the
‘ *gratuitous imputation of the righteousness of another*
‘ *unto them**.’

Where, now, either in the preceding, or in any other passages of holy Writ, shall we find our Author’s doctrine, respecting ‘ the necessity of a sinner’s exercising virtue, antecedent to his justification, and *in order to it*?’ Where, in the Oracles of God, is that *union* with Christ, which constitutes the *proper ground* of his righteousness being imputed to us, represented as arising from the exercise of our *own virtue*? Or where, in the inspired Volume, do we perceive any thing said, about the hearts of sinners being united to Christ, *previous* to faith in him, and justification by him? Nay, our Author himself seems to contradict this, by elsewhere saying; ‘ He who believeth not in Christ, is not so united to him and in him, as that his merit and righteousness—may be properly

* *Doctrine of Justification*, Chap. XVIII.

‘imputed to him, or reckoned to his account—The Son
‘of God, who is equal with God, and is God,—is ready
‘to pardon and save all that come unto him; to which
‘all, even the *most guilty and vile*, are **FREELY** invited *.’

‘They, whom our Lord invites, and whom the gospel encourages to believe in him, are described as ‘labouring under a burden; as *thirsty*, and so on.’ True: but must we consider that *burden*, or this *thirst*, as the mark of a gracious change having taken place in their hearts; as an holy qualification for acceptance with Christ; or as *authorising* them to believe in him? If so, the gospel, as already proved, should be preached to none but those who are *born of God*—that are, to a considerable degree, sanctified—that are already in the way to heaven; and those who are, in Scripture, denominated *sinners*, have no encouragement. Whereas, our Lord’s commission was; *Preach the gospel*, or proclaim the glad tidings, *to every creature*: and his invitation is, *Come, and take FREELY—without money and without price*.

The *burden* which is here meant, by our compassionate Saviour, seems to be no other than *guilt*, oppressing the conscience; of which the awakened sinner *labours* to get rid, by means of his own devising: and the *thirst*,

* *Two Discourses*, p. 15, 91, 92.

an earnest desire of happiness, in the attainment of such objects as cannot afford it. Now, a *burden* and a *thirst* of this kind are frequently experienced by those who are unregenerate, and far from having the least degree of holiness. Cain, for example, the firstborn of woman, felt that burden, and complained of it, as too heavy for him to bear*; though he was, and continued to be, an enemy to God. Judas, also, experienced the weight of that burden, to an intolerable degree; sunk under its pressure; and perished without remedy †. Whence it appears, that the deepest sense of guilt, and the most alarming apprehensions of eternal ruin, are, detached from other considerations, no evidence of love to God; no proof of sanctifying influence; nor any indication that the subjects of them are in the way to holiness and happiness.—Yet, as Dr. OWEN has well observed,

‘ Some, finding this *sense of sin*, with those other things
‘ that attend it, wrought in them, in some measure, begin
‘ to think, that *now* all is well: this is all that is of them
‘ required. They will endeavour to make a *life*, from
‘ such arguments of *comfort* as they can take from this
‘ *trouble*. They think this a *ground* of peace, that they
‘ have *not* peace. Here some take up before conversion,
‘ and it proves their ruin. Because they are convinced
‘ of sin, and troubled about it, and burdened with it,
‘ they think it shall be well with them. But, were not

* Gen. iv. 13.

† Matt. xxvii. 3, 4, 5.

‘ Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, convinced of sin, and burdened with it? Did this profit them? Did it interest them in the promises? Did not the wrath of God overtake them, notwithstanding? So it is with many daily: they think their *conviction* is *conversion*; and that their sins are *pardoned*, because they have been *troubled*—For a soul to place the spring of its peace or comfort in any thing of its own, is to fall short of Christ, and take up in *self*. We must not only be *justified*, but *glory* in him also. (Isa. xlvi. 25.) Men may make use of the *evidence* of their graces; but only as a medium to a farther end: not as the *rest* of the soul, in the least. And this deprives men’s very *humiliations* of all gospel humility. True humility consists more in *believing*, than in being *sensible* of sin. That’s the soul’s great selfemptying and abasing: this may consist with an obstinate resolution to scramble for something upon the account of selfendeavours *.’

Is the *heavy-laden* sinner invited to Christ? it is, not as *qualified* by being burdened, but as *guilty* and *perishing*, that he must apply to the Saviour; taking all his encouragement so to do, from the testimony of God concerning Jesus.—As to a *thirst* of happiness, it is natural to intelligent beings: nor does it seem possible for any creature to possess rational existence, without desir-

* On the *Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm*, p. 62, 63.

ing its own happiness. But the divine Oracles have informed us, that sinners may hunger for that which is *not bread*, and thirst for that which cannot satisfy.

Mr. TILLINGHAST, in answer to this objection, says :
‘ When Christ bids those that are *weary and heavy-laden*
‘ come to him, doth it therefore follow, [that] he ex-
‘ cludes all others? I grant, such are to come: and
‘ such are most *backward* and *afraid* to come, and there-
‘ fore called. But doth it follow, therefore, that no
‘ other must come; and that these, and only these, are
‘ called? If a prince send forth [a] proclamation to a
‘ company of traitors, to come in, and he will pardon
‘ them; and because he knows that there are some few
‘ among them, that are so sensible of what they have
‘ done, and brought themselves into by their rebellion,
‘ that they will never come upon this general proclama-
‘ tion, but, for fear, will run away; he therefore sends
‘ particularly to these, by name, *You, and you, who*
‘ *dare not come for fear of being hanged; Come, I will*
‘ *pardon you, and you;* doth it therefore follow, because
‘ they have a call, as it were by name, therefore now all
‘ the rest, who have a general call are excluded? So
‘ here.—But this fain would I know, What is the
‘ state and condition that souls are then in, when they
‘ are thus *weary and heavy-laden?* Are they in the state
‘ and condition of *sinners*, or not? Righteous, or un-
‘ righteous? One [of these] they must be. If you say,

‘ they are not *sinners*, but *righteous* persons ; then I
‘ ask, How came they [to be] thus ? Is it by their
‘ being *weary and heavy laden*, barely ? Or is it by
‘ their applying of the promise ? If it be by their being
‘ *weary and heavy-laden*, then what need you press them
‘ to come to Christ for justification ; when as they have
‘ the same by this their qualification ? If it be by applying
‘ the *promise*, or having it applied to them ; then it will
‘ follow, that, notwithstanding this their qualification,
‘ that they are *sinners*, and so remain until they apply
‘ the promise, or have it applied to them*.’

Thus, MR. THOMAS BOSTON : ‘ The thirst mentioned (Isa. lv. 1.) [must not] be restricted to a *gracious* thirst, a thirst after Christ and his righteousness. For some, at least, of the *thirsting* ones, to whom the offer is there made, are *spending money for that which is not bread*, and their *labour for that which satisfieth not*. But it is evident, that sinners duly sensible, who are *thirsting* after Christ and his righteousness, are not *spending* their money and labour at that rate ; but, on the contrary, for that which alone is *bread*, and *satisfieth* ; namely, Jesus Christ, the *true bread*, which *came down from heaven*. Wherefore, the *thirst* there meant, must needs comprehend, yea, and principally aim at, that thirst after happiness and satisfaction which,

* *Six Treatises*, p. 67, 68. London, 1663.

‘ being natural, is common to all mankind. Men,
‘ pained with this thirst, do naturally run, for quenching
‘ thereof, to the empty creation, and their fulsome lusts:
‘ and so they *spend money for that which is not bread*, and
‘ their *labour, for that which satisfieth not*; finding
‘ nothing there that can satisfy that their appetite, or
‘ thirst—As little is the solemn gospel-offer (Matt. xi.
‘ 28.) restricted to a certain set of men endowed with
‘ some laudable *qualifications*, going under the name of
‘ *labouring* and being *heavy-laden*: the which do, indeed,
‘ denote the *restlessness* natural to the sinful soul of man,
‘ spending its labour *for that which satisfieth not*. Our
‘ father Adam left his whole family with a conscience
‘ full of guilt, and a heart full of unsatisfied desires.
‘ Thus we naturally having a restless conscience, and a
‘ restless heart, the soul as naturally falls a labouring for
‘ rest to them. And it labours in the barren region of
‘ the fiery law, for a rest to the conscience; and in the
‘ empty creation, for a rest to the heart. But, after all,
‘ the conscience is still heavy-laden with guilt,—and the
‘ heart is still under a load of unsatisfied desires. So neither
‘ the one, nor the other, can find rest indeed. This is
‘ the natural case of all men: and to souls thus *labouring*
‘ and *laden*, Jesus Christ calls, that they may *come to him*,
‘ and he will give them *rest*: namely, a rest for their con-
‘ sciences, under the covert of his blood; and a rest to
‘ their hearts, in the enjoyment of God through him*.’

* Works, p. 227, 228. See also, p. 845. Note.

It has, with some degree of confidence, been demanded ; ‘ Whether, if sinners must not come to Christ ‘ *as penitent*, and as possessing an *holy disposition*; they ‘ are to believe in him, *as impenitent*, and as under the ‘ *reigning power* of their depravity?’ But this, like some other objections, is not pertinent. For the question is, What is the proper *warrant* for a sinner to believe in Jesus? Not, What is *the state of his heart*, in the moment when he first believes?—Or, if the objection did apply, it might be answered; Neither *as a penitent*, nor *as an impenitent sinner*: but merely under the character of one that is *guilty* and *perishing*. It was for such that Jesus died: it is to such the tidings of salvation were addressed by the Apostles: and, therefore, such are encouraged to believe in Christ. The objector might, consequently, with equal reason have asked; Whether, in a public ministry, salvation by the Redeemer should be exhibited to *penitents*, or to *impenitents*; to those that have some degree of holiness, or to those who have none? and then the answer would have been; To neither *those*, nor *these*, respectively *as such*: but to all of them, without exception, as deserving condemnation and final misery. Nor is there any reason to doubt, whether he to whom, by divine authority, salvation through Christ is preached, be warranted to believe in him.

It has been objected, ‘ To assert that sinners, while destitute of holiness, are warranted to believe in Christ; is to maintain, that they are authorised to expect the felicity of heaven, while their native love of sin continues in all its force, and while they are hardened rebels against God.’ But there is a great and palpable difference between persons, while in their native state, being authorised to *believe* in Jesus; and their being warranted, while in that condition, to *expect* final happiness. Yet this objection proceeds on a supposition, that whoever is encouraged by the word of grace to depend on Christ; is, at the very same instant, merely on the same ground, and while an unbeliever, equally authorised to expect everlasting life: which is a gross mistake. For he that believes in Christ, relies on him as *justifying the ungodly*: but he who, on scriptural grounds, hopes for future felicity, expects it as a believer; as in a justified state; as having a turn of heart, in some degree suited to the employments and enjoyments of heaven. Because, *without holiness, no one shall see the Lord*.—Did Paul, for instance, *believe* in Jesus? it was under the consideration of himself, as a *blasphemer, a persecutor, and the chief of sinners**. Did he rejoice in *hope*? it was, as having *received the atonement*†; as bearing the image of Christ; and as having a spiritual relish for

* 1 Tim. i. 13, 14, 15.

† Rom. v. 1, 2, 11.

heavenly things. The *sinner* believes: the *believer* hopes.—Nor can any man believe in Christ, and continue a rebel against God: for sovereign mercy, when it relieves the conscience, alters the bias of the heart, and forms the character anew. God, in the exercise and manifestation of pardoning grace to rebels, makes them his friends. Thus divine *goodness leads to repentance, to holiness, and to hope of everlasting happiness. There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared.*

‘ If we maintain that the ungodly are warranted to believe in Jesus, there will be great danger of encouraging a superficial, Antinomian faith. Because guilty creatures, under the power of their depravity, are much more likely to approve the character of Christ, when represented as willing to receive the altogether unholy; than if he were considered as receiving none but those who are cordially disposed to perform the divine precepts.’

That the sentiment for which I plead, may be prostituted to licentious purposes; and that, in certain instances, it probably has been so abused, will be admitted. But, be that as it may, Jesus must either be so exhibited in a public ministry, as to suit the character, the state, the circumstances of apostate creatures, or there is no *gospel* for them. Besides, the misapplication of any doctrine, affords no argument against, either its truth, or its impor-

tance: because the most excellent doctrines, and the plainest passages of Scripture, have been frequently abused to execrable purposes.

This objection seems to imply, that a selfrighteous turn of heart, and pharisaical pride, make no part of human depravity. For it apparently supposes, that there is little or no danger of sinners treating Christ with disrespect, except by considering him as *the minister of sin*: or, of their opposing the designs of divine grace, in any way, besides that of licentiousness. But it appears, from Scripture, from experience, and from observation, that sinners are naturally and strongly inclined to seek justification by *the works of the law*; that a violent propensity to cherish the notion of self-worthiness, is an essential part of their natural depravity; and that the disrespect with which Christ is generally treated by them, arises principally from that quarter. Yes, their low thoughts respecting the evil of sin, and the high opinion they form of their own character, are the chief source of that neglect with which they treat the divine Jesus, and of all their opposition to saving grace. Nay, so universal, and so predominant is this propensity to self-worthiness, that, for *one* who abuses the sentiment here defended, by converting it into an occasion of sin; *ten thousand* may be justly considered as dishonouring Christ, and as rebelling against God, under the pernicious influence of that principle which I oppose.

It is a great mistake to imagine, that ungodly men are so ready to adopt the sentiment for which I contend. Certain it is, from the history of our Lord's ministry, and from the writings of Paul, that few things in the preaching, either of Christ, or of the Apostle, were so offensive to persons of respectability among the Jews, as the doctrine which they preached, relative to pardon and acceptance with God. The discourses of Jesus, respecting divine grace, were extremely offensive to the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the reputedly devout in general. But, had the tenour of our Saviour's preaching, or of his converse among the people, been contrary to the principle here avowed ; it is not supposable that the Jews would have so frequently complained of him, and objected against his conduct, as they did. Witness the following sayings: *Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners ?—Behold—a friend of publicans and sinners !—Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners ?—This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner—This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them—They murmured saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner**. Now, it is evident, these murmurers and objectors were the reputedly devout ; those who considered

* Matt. ix. 11. xi. 19. Luke v. 30. vii. 39. xv. 2.
xix. 7.

themselves, and were considered by others, as possessing virtuous dispositions and holy zeal: yet they were those to whom our Lord addressed himself in the following manner; *Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots, the most profligate of both sexes, go into the kingdom of heaven before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward that ye might believe**.

Such was the treatment of Jesus, by the most respectable part of the public; and such was his language concerning those who, under the fair pretext of zeal for holiness, rejected his doctrine, and persecuted his person! With reference to whom, when arguing on their selfrighteous principles in vindication of his own conduct, he spake three admirably gracious Parables at the same time, which Luke has recorded †.—Now, can it be supposed, with any appearance of probability, that the selfrighteous Jews would have cast such reflections on the character of Christ, as a public teacher, if he had insisted on any degree of personal holiness, as previously necessary to faith in revealed mercy, as the only ground of acceptance with God? Had our Lord, in the course of his ministry, from time to time assured them, that every one must, prior to receiving his testimony of

* Matt. xxi. 31, 32.

† Luke xv.

pardoning mercy and believing in him, be heartily disposed to keep the commands of God; they could not, with any shadow of reason, have raised such a clamour against his doctrine and conduct.

That the ministry of Paul was perfectly consistent with the sentiment here defended, appears from those objections with which he meets, and from the answers which he returns. Thus, for example: *Some affirm that we say, Let us do evil, that good may come—Do we then make void the law through faith?—Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?—Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?** Such were the objections: and they imply, That, in the estimation of those who made them, the doctrine of Paul, implicitly, or by necessary consequence, vacated the authority of God in his law—That believers, being delivered from the law, as a covenant, or as prescribing the condition on which everlasting life is to be obtained, may safely continue in sin—That such continuance in the practice of sin, would illustrate the riches, and manifest the glory, of divine grace—And that, by accumulating moral evil, the highest good would be promoted.

To such various and formidable objections was the doctrine of Paul considered, by multitudes, as justly

* Rom. iii. 7, 8, 31. vi. 1, 15.

exposed ! objections, however, which he repelled with abhorrence, and refuted with ease. But, could any person of common understanding, with the least appearance of propriety, have made these objections to the gospel which Paul preached, if he had taught, That an *holy turn of heart, a disposition to perform the commands of God, or the exercise of virtue,* is previously necessary to warrant a sinner's dependence on Jesus Christ for pardon and peace ? Common sense, and a moment's reflection, forbid the thought. For, on that supposition, he must have laid the foundation of expecting any spiritual benefit from Christ, in the *previous, personal holiness* of every sinner who applies to him : which would have subverted the whole of his doctrine, respecting the justification of sinners before God.—Has it been usual—I appeal to the intelligent reader—has it been usual, in modern times, for the doctrine of religious teachers to be charged with such consequences, or to be opposed by such objections ; when it was notorious, that they firmly insisted on the necessity of every one exercising virtue, or possessing some degree of true holiness, in order to warrant a reliance on Jesus Christ for pardon and acceptance ? Was any teacher of religion ever charged with *making void the law* ; or with implicitly saying, *Let us do evil, that good may come;* by those who heard his discourses, or perused his writings, in which he maintained, that no sinner is authorised to believe in Christ, until he is *disposed to observe the divine precepts?* Surely

not! or, if a fact, the objector's conduct must be considered as the effusion of mental imbecility, as a violent paroxysm of prejudice, or as the virulence of deliberate malice.

But if, on the contrary, we understand Paul as maintaining, That Christ, with all his fulness of spiritual blessings, is *free, perfectly free* for the vilest ; if we consider him as encouraging the *chief* of sinners, merely under the character of perishing wretches, to rely on Jesus for their immediate acceptance with God, and as giving them assurance that, in so doing, they shall not be disappointed ; if we further consider the Apostle as teaching, that the justification of sinners is merely, entirely, absolutely on the ground of our Lord's vicarious obedience imputed ; *then* we perceive the true source of these objections. For that doctrine, in the eyes of all whose hearts are leavened with legal pride, will ever be treated as an insult on moral virtue ; as inimical to the divine law ; and as having the most licentious tendency. The same doctrine, it is apparent, is opposed by similar objections in our own times : but, *Wisdom is justified of her children.*

The principle for which I plead will be further confirmed, if we take into consideration those *replies* which the Apostle made in defence of his doctrine. How, then, does he answer the unfounded and calum-

niating objections? Not by saying, ‘No: I never asserted, I never meant, that sinners may believe in Christ, for pardon and peace, before they are disposed to observe the divine precepts. I always taught, that they must love God, or be virtuously inclined to perform his will, before they can acceptably believe in Christ.’—But, instead of replying in that manner, his answers are? It is a *f slanderous report*; and the *damnation* of those who raised it is *just*—*God forbid!* yea, we establish the law—*God forbid!* how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? *God forbid!* know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that though, before ye believed in Jesus, ye were the servants, or slaves, of sin; yet ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you*.

Here we see, that Paul repels and refutes the objections, by strong negations; by showing the absurdity of those grounds on which some of them proceed; and by denouncing the judgment of God against all those who dared, out of hatred to evangelical truth, maliciously to slander the apostolic ministry. It should be observed, however, that the Apostle does not give the least intimation of his doctrine having been misunderstood, relative

* Rom. iii. 8, 31. vi. 2, 15, 16, 17.

to the *moral state* of those whom he encouraged to believe in Jesus, for the remission of sins, and acceptance with God.—To prove that none can justly consider themselves as having *already* believed in Christ, except they be cordially disposed to holy obedience, his replies are pertinent and strong : but they do not in the least imply, that sinners must have some degree of holiness, or that they must exercise virtue, before they are warranted to believe in him. The want of observing this obvious distinction, seems to be the principal reason of that confusion which often attends the ideas of serious persons on this important subject ; and of those mistakes into which they fall, relative to the true ground of a sinner's application to Christ, by which their consciences are frequently so much embarrassed.

Once more: It may, perhaps, be objected ; ‘ The principle defended infers the doctrine of *general redemption.*’ To this I answer, in the words of Dr. OWEN. ‘ Many disputes there are, whether Christ died for all individuals of mankind, or no. If we say No, but only for the elect, who are *some of all sorts*: some then tell us, we cannot invite all men promiscuously to believe. But why so ? We invite not men, as *all* men ; no man, as *one* of all men ; but all men as *sinners*: and we know that Christ *died for sinners.* But, is this the first thing, that we are, in the dispensation of the gospel, to propose to the soul of a sinner, under the law, That

' Christ died for him in particular ? Is that the beginning of our message unto him ? Were not this a ready way to induce him to conclude, Let me then continue in sin, that grace may abound ? No : but this is, in order of nature, our first work ; even that we have had in hand. This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is *the voice of one crying in the wilderness,* ' Prepare ye the way of the Lord. There is a way of reconciliation provided. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. There is a way of acceptance: there is forgiveness with him to be obtained. At this threshold of the Lord's house, doth the greatest part of men to whom the gospel is preached fall and perish; never looking in to see the treasures that are in the house itself; never coming into any such state and condition, wherein they have any ground or bottom to enquire, Whether Christ died for them, in particular, or no ? They believe not this report, nor take any serious notice of it. This was the ministry of the Baptist; and they who received it not, rejected the counsel of God concerning their salvation; and so perished in their sins. This is the sum of the blessed invitation given by Wisdom: and here men stumble, fall, and perish. Luke vii. 10. Prov. ix. 1—5. i. 29, 30*.'

* On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm, p. 250.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SALUTARY AND PRACTICAL TENDENCIES OF
THE PRINCIPLE MAINTAINED.

*THE truth, as it is in Jesus, being the doctrine according to godliness **, cannot but be adapted to practical purposes ; and, therefore, must have a salutary influence on the hearts of all those who really believe it. Of this nature is the sentiment for which I plead ; as, perhaps, may appear by the following considerations.

It has a natural tendency to humble self-righteous pride, by annihilating all distinctions among men, respecting the ground of their acceptance with God. Now this is perfectly agreeable to the genius of evangelical truth, and to the nature of Messiah's kingdom ; as appears by the following prophetic Oracle, relative to the ministry of John the Baptist, and the commencement of gospel times. *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low : and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain : and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all*

* Eph. iv. 21. 1 Tim. vi. 3. Titus i. 1.

*flesh, on one common level, and without the least regard to difference of character, shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it *.*

As vain man would be wise, though born like a wild ass's colt †; so proud man would be righteous, though guilty before God, and obnoxious to ruin. If, however, the divine law be equitable, sinners are justly accursed ‡; and, if their condemnation be righteous, they cannot have the least hope, except through sovereign mercy.—A small degree of difference from others, with regard to exterior character, is commonly considered, notwithstanding, as recommending to the favour of God, and as furnishing a ground of hope, through Jesus Christ. Now, in whomsoever this persuasion prevails, the gospel is understood as directing all the relief it reveals, to the qualified, the virtuous, the worthy: not the guilty, the vile, and the wretched. It is considered, therefore, not as adapted to humble the proud heart, and to relieve the pained conscience; but as maintaining a proper distinction between different characters, and as paying a just regard to human worth. While, consequently, to multitudes, who think themselves comparatively righteous, it ministers food for self importance; it leaves others, who consider themselves as the chief of sinners, without the least foundation of hope.—The principle,

* Isa. xl. 3, 4, 5. † Job xi. 12. ‡ Gal. iii. 10.

however, for which I contend, has a directly contrary tendency : for, in prophetic language, it *levels* mountains, and *elevates* valleys. Or, in the words of our Lord, it *abases* those that are exalted, and *exalts* those that are abased*. Because it maintains, that there is the very *same* ground of encouragement, and to an *equal* degree, for men to believe in Jesus, whether they be esteemed moral, or profligate ; pious, or profane.

It is most happily suited to relieve those who are held in the snare of despondency, by forbidding despair in the vilest wretch that lives. Many there are, we have reason to think, who, having, for a long course of time, violated the dictates of conscience, by indulging their worst propensities ; having, in multiplied instances, acted contrary to friendly advice, to their own resolutions, promises, vows ; and having, perhaps, been the manifest occasion of ruin to various others ; implicitly say, with those in the Prophet, *There is no hope: no; for we have loved strangers, and after them will we go†.* Thus, in a kind of fullen despair, they harden their consciences ; in order to enjoy, for a while, the pleasures of sin, without controul, and without remorse. Perceiving no reason for hope, they endeavour to discard fear. Having no conception that *there is forgiveness with God*, for persons in

* Matt. xxiii. 12. Luke xiv. 11. xviii. 14.

† Jer. ii. 25.

their situation; or that such enormous offenders may find acceptance through Jesus Christ; they rush on to final ruin. For, where there is no hope of escaping evil, there are no efforts to guard against it.

The doctrine for which I plead, is, however, adapted to break the destructive snare, by exhibiting a ground of hope. Yes, the gracious gospel, considered as a complete warrant for the ungodly to believe in Jesus, encourages the most profligate, and the most criminal, to regard the atonement of Christ as allsufficient. ‘There ‘is not,’ as one observes, ‘a more effectual remedy ‘[against despondency,] than the consideration of the ‘freeness of the grace of God in Christ and the promises: ‘which are not made to such as *deserve* mercy, but to ‘such as *want* it; not to righteous persons, but to sin-‘ners; not to the whole, but to the sick—Of all the ‘ways and experiments to bear up a sinking spirit, ‘there is no consideration like this, That from the ‘beginning to the end of our salvation, nothing is prima-‘rily active but *free grace*. This is a firm bottom of ‘comfort against the guilt of the most bloody and crim-‘son sins: because free grace is not tied to any rules: ‘it may do what it pleases*. It belongs, indeed, to the very nature of *grace*, properly so called, to be abso-lutely free and sovereign, in all its bestowments: for

* Dr. SPURSTOWE’s *Wells of Salvation opened*, p. 50, 51.

where there is desert, whether intrinsic or pactical, the operation of grace necessarily ceases, and, if rectitude prevail, that of equity takes place.

It is admirably fitted to excite hope and produce comfort in those who, though not sunk in despondency, are deeply distressed by a sense of guilt, of depravity, and of unworthiness. Are the consciences of men alarmed, by a conviction of sin, and an apprehension of deserved wrath for past offences? Are sinners, being acquainted with their own hearts, conscious of strong propensities to evil, and of numerous criminal imperfections attending their best performances? they consider themselves as altogether vile. Discerning nothing in their hearts, nor any thing in their lives, which deserves the name of *holiness*; but, on the contrary, much that seems to mark them out for destruction; they have nothing to remove their painful fears, or to relieve their burdened consciences, except what the gospel says concerning divine mercy, as manifested in Jesus Christ. He being revealed, however, as perfectly suitable to their wants, and as completely free for their acceptance; they are presented, by sovereign grace, with an allsufficient Saviour for their immediate dependence. Confiding in the testimony of God as true, and receiving the provision of his grace as a free gift; they find relief, and enjoy peace. Nor does the comfort obtained arise from reflecting on the *manner* in which they believe, but from that *grace*

which the gospel reveals, and from the *all-sufficiency* of Jesus in whom they trust.

It is of great importance to the real Christian, in times of spiritual darkness and of discouragement. Has he, by the power of indwelling sin, or through the force of Satan's temptations, lost that peace which arises from a view of interest in Jesus Christ? Is he incapable of approaching God with a filial confidence, crying, *Abba Father?* he recurs to this truth, as the first spring of his encouragement, and, under the character of a *sinner*, applies to Christ afresh. It being fixed in his mind, as a leading principle of revealed truth, that the most ungodly are authorised to believe in Jesus; and that no degree of previous holiness is necessary for that purpose; he cannot, even in his worst condition, but consider himself as within the verge of that encouragement. As, therefore, it is by faith in Christ that he derives hope; and as, under the influence of hope, spiritual endeavours are excited; so, in this procedure, not only peace of conscience, but prayer and watchfulness, brotherly love and self-denial, communion with God and heavenly mindedness, are promoted.

Besides, under the practical influence of this principle, he will not be so liable to deceive himself, with regard to his real state in the sight of God; by inferring his regeneration from any religious impulses which he has felt,

or from any starts of devotional affection which he may experience. No: he will be disposed to form a conclusion, respecting his general character, in the estimate of Omniscience, from the *habitual regard* which he pays, to the atonement, the authority, and the example, of Jesus Christ. For though it must be admitted, that every real Christian is *led by the Spirit of God**; and though, by the word of truth, that divine Agent produce, excite, and maintain devout affections in the soul; yet we ought never to consider substantial evidence of true godliness, as arising from secret impulses, however strong; nor from transient flashes of religious affection, be they ever so high: but from the *general frame* of the heart, respecting the glorious God, as revealing himself in Jesus Christ.

It is of great moment in the Christian's daily walk with God. The reason is, it has a powerful tendency to promote an habitual regard to the word of grace and the atonement of Christ, as the only source of spiritual peace. The Christian, being conscious of daily contracting fresh guilt, considering his transgressions, and his numerous imperfections in religious duty, as attended with peculiar aggravations, arising from his knowledge of the divine will, the blessings he enjoys, the profession he makes, and the character he bears; it is only by an

* Rom. viii. 14.

habitual dependence on the atonement of Christ, that peace is maintained in his conscience, and that he feels the operation of evangelical motives to obedience. This, if I mistake not, is perfectly congenial to that grand maxim of Inspiration ; *The just shall live by faith** : shall derive all his peace, and perform all his obedience, through faith in the atoning blood, the gracious doctrines, the precious promises, and the superintending Providence†, of Jesus Christ ‡.

It leads to holy obedience, and furnishes with cogent motives to the performance of it. Paul, when exhorting servants to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*, says ; *The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, without exception, as to national distinction, or moral character ; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and*

* Hab. ii. 4. Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. ii. 20.

† Matt xxviii. 18. Eph. i. 22. 1 John v. 4. Heb. xi. *passim.*

‡ The following words of CALVIN deserve regard. ‘ Fidei fundamentum facimus gratuitum promissionem, quod in ipsa proprietate, fides consistat. Tametsi enim Deum per omnia veracem esse statuat, sive jubeat, sive prohibeat ; sive promittat, sive minetur, iussa etiam ejus obedienter excipiat, interdicta observet, ad minas animadvertat ; propriè tamen à promissione incipit, in ipsa constat, in ipsam definit. Vitam enim in Deo quaerit, quæ non in mandatis, aut pœnarum edictis, sed misericordiæ promissione reperitur, ea que non nisi gratuita : quoniam conditionalis, qua ad opera nostra remittimur, non aliter vitam

godly, in this present world *. On this very interesting passage, Mr. HERVEY thus paraphrases and remarks :

‘ *The grace of God*; his infinitely free favour,—which
 ‘ scorns to be shackled with conditions, or meanly de-
 ‘ pendent on human endeavours—This grace, requiring
 ‘ nothing of the creature, but *bringing salvation*, spiritual
 ‘ and eternal salvation, finished by the incarnate Creator,
 ‘ and free for the chiefest of sinners. This grace, being
 ‘ revealed in the gospel, being discerned by faith, and
 ‘ thus appearing in lustre, and with power, *to all men*—
 ‘ To men of every rank, every age, every character;
 ‘ making no difference between the servant and his
 ‘ master; between the ruddy stripling and the hoary sire;
 ‘ between the vile prostitute and the chaste vestal; but
 ‘ opening its inexhaustible stores, to be received by one
 ‘ as well as the other—This grace, does what? Cause
 ‘ Antinomianism, or practical ungodliness, to come in
 ‘ with a full tide? Quite the reverse. It represses it like
 ‘ an immovable barrier. It *teaches us to deny*, to re-
 ‘ nounce ungodliness, *all ungodliness*: not only external,
 ‘ gross abominations, but *worldly lusts* also; every vici-
 ‘ ous inclination, and every irregular desire. Farther, it

‘ promittit, quam si perspiciamus esse in nobis sitam. Ergo,
 ‘ nisi fidem tremere ac vacillare volumus, illam salutis promissione
 ‘ fulsiamus oportet: quæ à Domíno ultrò ac liberaliter, potius-
 ‘ que miseriæ nostra quám dignitatis respectu offeratur.’ *Institut.*
 L. III. Chap. ii. § 29.

* Titus ii. 11, 12.

‘ teaches us to live *soberly*, with regard to ourselves ;
‘ *righteously*, towards our neighbours ; and *godly* to our
‘ Creator.

‘ The original word is particularly beautiful and significant. It is not *πατεῖ*, *prescribeth*, by way of rule ;
‘ nor *πιτασθεῖ*, *enjoineth*, by way of authority ; but *παι-*
‘ *δεῖναι*, *teacheth*, by way of instruction ; pointeth out
‘ the effectual method of obeying the precepts, and con-
‘ forming to the rule. A tyrant may command his
‘ slave to write, or make a proficiency in writing.
‘ A kind tutor forms him to it ; shows him how to do
‘ it ; and renders what would otherwise be an irksome,
‘ perhaps, an impracticable task, both easy and pleasant.
‘ So this grace, clearly manifested in the understanding,
‘ and cordially apprehended by the will, renders every
‘ duty of holiness both practicable and pleasant : it gives
‘ us a heart, and a hand, and ability, to exercise our-
‘ selves unto universal godliness *.’

Dr. OWEN, when directing sinners to regard that forgiveness which is with God, as the first source of their encouragement, says ; ‘ This is the *only* way and means
‘ to enable you to obedience, and to render what you
‘ do therein acceptable unto God. It may be, that some
‘ of you are under the power of convictions, and have

* *Eleven Letters to Mr. J. WESLEY*, p. 179, 180.

‘ made engagements unto God to live unto him, to
‘ keep yourselves from sin, and to follow after holiness.
‘ It may be, you have done so in afflictions, dangers,
‘ sicknesses, or upon the receipt of mercies: but yet you
‘ find that you cannot come unto any stability, or consis-
‘ tency, in your course. You break with God and
‘ your own souls, which fills you with new disquietments;
‘ or else hardens you, and makes you secure and negli-
‘ gent: so that you return unto your purposes no oftener,
‘ than your convictions, or afflictions, befall you anew.
‘ This condition is ruinous and pernicious, which nothing
‘ can deliver you from, but this closing with forgiveness.
‘ For, all that you do without this, however it may
‘ please your minds, or ease your consciences, is not at
‘ all accepted with God. Unless this foundation be
‘ laid, all that you do is lost. All your prayers, all
‘ your duties, all your amendments, are an abomination
‘ to the Lord. Until peace is made with him, they are
‘ but the acts of enemies, which he despiseth and abhor-
‘ reth. You run, it may be, earnestly; but you run
‘ out of the way: you strive, but not lawfully, and shall
‘ never receive the crown. True gospel obedience is
‘ the fruit of the faith of forgiveness. Whatever you
‘ do without it, is but a building without a foundation;
‘ a castle in the air. You may see the order of gospel
‘ obedience, Eph. ii. 7—10. The foundation must be
‘ laid in *grace*; *riches of grace*, by Christ, in the free
‘ pardon and forgiveness of sin. From hence must the

‘ works of obedience proceed, if you would have them
‘ to be of God’s appointment, or find acceptance with
‘ him. Without this, God will say of all your services,
‘ worship, obedience, as he did to the Israelites of old,
‘ (Amos v. 21—25.) *I despise all; reject it all:* it is
‘ not to him, nor to his glory. Now, if you are under
‘ convictions of any sort, there is nothing you more
‘ value, nothing you more place your confidence in,
‘ than your duties: your repentance, your amendment:
‘ what you do, and what in good time you will be. Is
‘ it nothing unto you, to lose all your hopes and all your
‘ expectations, which you have from hence? To have
‘ no other reception with God, than if all this time you
‘ had been wallowing in your sins and lusts? Yet thus
‘ it is with you, if you have not begun with God on
‘ his own terms; if you have not *received the atonement*,
‘ in the blood of his Son; if you are not made partakers
‘ of forgiveness; if your persons are not pardoned, all
‘ your duties are accursed.

‘ This alone will give you such motives and encou-
‘ ragements unto obedience, as will give you life,
‘ alacrity, and delight in it. You perform duties, ab-
‘ stain from sins; but with heaviness, fear, and in bon-
‘ dage. Could you do as well without them, as with
‘ them; would conscience be quiet, and hope of eter-
‘ nity hold out; you would omit them forever. This
‘ makes all your obedience burdensome; and you cry

‘ out in your thoughts, with him in the Prophet ;
‘ *Behold, what a weariness it is !* The service of God is
‘ the only drudgery of your lives ; which you dare not
‘ omit, and delight not to perform. From this wretched
‘ and cursed frame, there is nothing that can deliver you
‘ but this closing with forgiveness. This will give you
‘ such motives, such encouragements, as will greatly
‘ influence your hearts and souls. It will give you free-
‘ dom, liberty, delight and cheerfulness, in all duties
‘ of gospel obedience. You will find a constraining
‘ power in the love of Christ therein : a freedom from
‘ bondage, when the Son truly hath made you free.
‘ Faith and love will work genuinely and naturally in
‘ your spirits ; and that which was your greatest burden,
‘ will become your chiefest joy. (2 Cor. vii. 1.)
‘ Thoughts of the love of God, of the blood of Christ,
‘ or the Covenant of Grace, and sense of pardon in
‘ them, will enlarge your hearts, and sweeten all your
‘ duties. You will find a new life, a new pleasure, a
‘ new satisfaction, in all that you do *.’

*It is perfectly consistent with the necessity of true holiness,
to constitute the Christian character, and to evidence the
Christian faith. Does any one ask, What is my warrant
for believing in Jesus Christ ? The answer is, Not any
thing done by you, not any thing wrought in you ; but*

* *On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm, p. 262, 263, 264.*

the word of grace, or the testimony of God concerning Jesus.—If the question be, What is the *evidence* of my having believed in Christ, as justifying the ungodly? regard must be had to the prevailing turn of your heart, respecting the riches of his grace, the allsufficiency of his work, and the plenitude of his authority: an habitual approbation of which, constitutes evidence to a person's own conscience of real faith in him.—If the question be, What is necessary to render a *profession* of that faith credible to others? then the answer is, *As faith worketh by love*, and as *faith without works is dead*; so a profession of faith in Jesus, not attended with fruits of love to his name, is entirely vain: and all pretences of love to Christ, without obedience to his commands, are equally futile. For thus it is written, *If ye love me, keep my commandments—He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me—If any man love me, he will keep my words—He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings—This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments—This is love, that we walk after his commandments—He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him**. —Carefully to distinguish, between that which *authorises* our believing in Jesus, and that which *evidences* our faith in him, is of the highest importance. Because,

* John xiv. 15, 21, 23, 24. 1 John v. 3. 2 John 6.
1 John ii. 4.

maintaining that holiness is previously necessary to the *former*, favours of selfrighteousness, intrenches on the honours of divine grace, and embarrasses the awakened conscience: while it is evident, that a denial of its utility, respecting the *latter*, contradicts the assertions of Inspiration, verges upon licentiousness, and tends to Antinomianism.

Relative to these particulars, to some articles of Christian experience, and to the state of unconverted sinners; I shall conclude the whole with various extracts from Dr. OWEN. Thus, then, that judicious Author:

' Our *foundation* in dealing with God, is Christ alone ;
' *mere* grace, and pardon in him. Our *building* is in
' and by holiness and obedience ; as the fruits of that
' faith by which we have received the atonement. And
' great mistakes there are in this matter, which bring
' great intanglements on the souls of men. Some are
' all their days laying the foundation, and are never able
' to build upon it, unto any comfort to themselves, or
' usefulness to others : and the reason is, because they
' will be mixing with the foundation stones, that are fit
' only for the following building. They will be bring-
' ing their obedience, duties, mortification of sin, and
' the like, unto the foundation. These are precious
' stones to *build* with, but unmeet to be first laid to
' bear upon them the *whole weight* of the building. The
' foundation is to be laid, as was said, in *mere* grace,

' mercy, pardon in the blood of Christ. This the soul
' is to accept of, and to rest in, *merely as it is GRACE*;
' without the consideration of any thing in itself, but
' that it is sinful and obnoxious unto ruin. This it finds
' a difficulty in, and would gladly have something of
' its own to mix with it. It cannot tell how to fix these
' foundation stones, without some cement of its own
' endeavours and duty: and because these things will
' not mix, they spend a fruitless labour about it all their
' days. But, if the foundation be *of grace*, it is not at
' all *of works*: for, otherwise, *grace is no more grace*.
' If any thing of our own be mixed with grace in this
' matter, it utterly destroys the nature of *grace*; which,
' if it be not *alone*, it is *not at all*. But doth not this
' tend to licentiousness? Doth not this render obedience,
' holiness, duties, mortification of sin, and good works,
' needless? God forbid! yea, this is the only way to
' order them aright unto the glory of God. Have we
' nothing to do, but *to lay the foundation*? yes, all our
' days we are to *build* upon it, when it is surely and
' firmly laid. And these are the means and ways of
' our edification. This, then, is the soul to do, who
' would come to peace and settlement. Let it let go
' all former endeavours, if it have been engaged unto
' any of that kind: and let it alone receive, admit of, and
' adhere to *mere grace, mercy, and pardon*; with a full
' sense that, in its self, it hath nothing for which it
' should have an interest in them, but that all is of mere

‘ grace, through Jesus Christ. *Other foundation can no man lay.* Depart not hence, until this work be well over. Surcease not an earnest endeavour with your own hearts, to acquiesce in this righteousness of God, and to bring your souls unto a comfortable persuasion that God, for *Christ his sake, hath freely forgiven you all your sins.* Stir not hence, until this be effected. If you have been engaged in another way; that is, to seek for an interest in the pardon of sin, by some endeavours of your own; it is not unlikely but you are filled with the fruit of your own doings: that is, that you go on with all kind of uncertainties, and without any kind of constant peace. Return, then, again hither: bring this foundation work to a blessed issue in the blood of Christ; and, when that is done, up and be doing.

‘ You know how fatal and ruinous it is, for souls to abuse the grace of God, and the apprehension of the pardon of sins, in the course of their obedience to countenance themselves in sin, or the negligence of any duty. This is to turn the grace of God into wantonness, as we have elsewhere at large declared. And it is no less pernicious, to bring the duties of our obedience; any reserves for them; any hopes about them, into the matter of pardon and forgiveness, as we are to receive them from God. But these things, as they are distinct in themselves, so they must be distinctly

‘ managed in the soul : and the confounding of them,
 ‘ is that which disturbs the peace, and weakens the
 ‘ obedience of many. In a confused manner, they
 ‘ labour to keep up a life of *grace* and *duty*; which will
 ‘ be, in their places, conjoined, but not mixed or com-
 ‘ pounded. First, to take up mercy, pardon and for-
 ‘ giveness, *absolutely on the account of Christ*; and then
 ‘ to yield all obedience in the *strength* of Christ, and
 ‘ for the *love* of Christ, is the life of a believer*.’

‘ They that believe *forgivenes*s in a due manner,
 ‘ believe it for the ends and purposes for which it is
 ‘ revealed of God—If God reveals any thing for *one*
 ‘ end and purpose, and men use it quite unto *another*;
 ‘ they do not receive the word of God, nor believe
 ‘ the thing revealed, but steal the word, and delude
 ‘ their own souls. Let us then weigh, to what end
 ‘ and purposes this forgiveneſſ was first revealed by
 ‘ God ; for which also its manifestation is still continued
 ‘ in the gospel. We have shewed before, who it was
 ‘ to whom this revelation was made, and what condi-
 ‘ tion he was in, when first it was made unto him. A
 ‘ lost, wretched creature, without hope or help, he was:
 ‘ how he should come to obtain acceptance with God,
 ‘ he knew not. God reveals forgiveneſſ unto him, by
 ‘ Christ, to be *his all*. The intention of God in it was,

* *On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm*, p. 300, 301, 302.

‘ that a sinner’s ALL *should be of grace*. (Rom. xi. 6.)
‘ If any thing be added unto it, for the same end and
‘ purpose, then *grace is no more grace*. Again, God
‘ intended it as a *new foundation* of obedience, of love,
‘ and thankfulness. That men should *love*, because for-
‘ given ; and be *holy*, because pardoned, as I have
‘ shewed before ; that it might be the righteousness of
‘ a sinner, and a spring of new obedience in him, all to
‘ the praise of grace, were God’s ends in its revelation *.’

‘ Self-condemnation and abhorrency do very well
‘ consist with gospel justification and peace. Some men
‘ have no peace, because they have *that*, without which
‘ it is impossible they should have peace. Because they
‘ cannot but condemn themselves, they cannot entertain
‘ a sense that God doth acquit them. But this is the
‘ mystery of the gospel, which unbelief is a stranger
‘ unto. Nothing but *faith* can give a real subsistence
‘ unto these things, in the same soul, and the same time.
‘ It is easy to learn the *notion* of it, but it is not easy to
‘ experience the *power* of it. For a man to have a
‘ sight of that *within* him, which would condemn him,
‘ for which he is troubled ; and, at the same time, to
‘ have a discovery of that *without* him, which will justify
‘ him, and to rejoice therein ; is that which he is not
‘ led unto, but by faith in the mystery of the gospel.

* On the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm, p. 239.

‘ We are now under *a law for justification*, which excludes all boasting, Rom. iii. 27. So that though we have joy enough in another, yet we *may* have, we always *have*, sufficient cause of humiliation in ourselves.

‘ The gospel will teach a man to *feel* sin, and *believe* righteousness, at the same time. Faith will carry heaven in one hand, and hell in the other ; shewing the one deserved, the other purchased. A man may see enough of his own sin and folly, to bring *Gehennam è Cælo*, a hell of wrath out of heaven ; and yet see Christ bring *Cælum ex Inferno*, a heaven of blessedness out of an hell of punishment. And these must needs produce very diverse, yea contrary effects and operations in the soul : and he who knows not how to assign them their proper duties, and seasons, must needs be perplexed. The work of self-condemnation, then, which men in these [painful exercises] cannot but abound with, is, in the disposition of the Covenant of Grace, no way inconsistent with, nor unsuited unto, justification, and the enjoyment of peace, in the sense of it. There may be a deep sense of sin, on other considerations besides *hell*. David was never more humbled for sin, than when Nathan told him it was forgiven : and there may be a view of hell, as *deserved* ; which yet the soul may know itself freed from, as to the *issue*—A deep sense of the evil of sin, of the guilt of [a] man’s *own* sin, is no way inconsistent with gospel assurance of acceptance with God through Christ,

‘ and of forgiveness in him. By a sense of the guilt of
‘ sin, I understand two things ; a clear conviction of sin,
‘ by the Holy Ghost saying unto the soul, *Thou art the*
‘ *man*: and a sense of the displeasure of God, or the
‘ wrath due to sin, according to the sentence of the law
‘ —Deep sorrow for sin is consistent with assurance of
‘ forgiveness : yea, it is a great means of preservation
‘ of it. Godly sorrow, mourning, humiliation, con-
‘ triteness of spirit, are no less gospel graces, and fruits
‘ of the Holy Ghost, than faith itself ; and so are con-
‘ sistent with the highest flourishings of faith whatever.
‘ It is the work of *heaven itself*, and not of the *assurance*
‘ of it, to wipe all tears from our eyes—Sorrow, abso-
‘ lutely exclusive of the faith of forgiveness, is *legal*, and
‘ tendeth to death. Assurance, absolutely exclusive of
‘ godly sorrow, is *presumption*, and not a *persuasion from*
‘ *him that calleth us*. But, gospel-sorrow, and gospel-
‘ assurance, may well dwell in the same breast, at the
‘ same time. Indeed, as in all worldly joys there is a
‘ secret wound ; so, in all godly sorrow and mourning,
‘ considered in itself, there is a secret joy and refresh-
‘ ment. Hence it doth not wither and dry up, but
‘ rather enlarge, open, and sweeten the heart. I am
‘ persuaded, that, generally, they *mourn most* who
‘ have *most assurance*. All true, gospel mourners, will
‘ be found to have the root of assurance so grafted in them,
‘ that, in its proper season (a time of trouble) it will
‘ undoubtedly flourish.

‘ A deep sense of the indwelling power of sin, is consistent with gospel assurance. Sense of indwelling sin will cause manifold perplexities in the soul. Trouble, disquietments, sorrow, anguish of heart ; expressing themselves in sighs, mourning, groaning for deliverance, always attend it. To what purpose do you speak, to a soul highly sensible of the restless power of indwelling sin, concerning *assurance*? “ Alas, faith “ he, I am ready to perish every moment! My lusts “ are strong, active, restless, yea outrageous : they give “ me no rest, no liberty, and but little success do I “ obtain. *Affurance* is for conquerors ; for them that “ live at rest and peace. I lie groveling on the ground “ all my days, and must needs be uncertain what will “ be the issue.”—But when such an one hath done all “ he can, he will not be able to make more woful complaints of this matter, than Paul hath done before him, “ Romans the seventh : and yet he closeth the discourse of it with as high an expression of *assurance*, as “ any person needs to seek after*. It is not *assurance*, “ but *enjoyment*, that excludes this sense and trouble. But, if men will think they can have no assurance, because they have *that*, without which it is impossible they should have any, it is hard to give them relief. A little *cruse of salt* of the gospel, cast into these bitter waters, will make them sweet and wholesome. Sense

* Rom. vii. 24. viii. 1.

‘ of the guilt of sin, may consist with faith of its pardon
‘ and forgiveness in the blood of Christ. Godly for-
‘ row may dwell in the same heart, and the same time,
‘ with joy in the Holy Ghost: and groaning after deli-
‘ verance from the power of sin, with a gracious per-
‘ suasion, that *sin shall not have dominion over us, because*
‘ *we are not under the law, but under grace**.’

‘ Known holiness, is apt to degenerate into selfrighte-
‘ ousness. What God gives us, on the account of
‘ sanctification, we are ready enough to reckon on the
‘ score of justification. It is a hard thing to *feel* grace,
‘ and to *believe* as if there were none. We have so
‘ much of the Pharisee in us, by nature, that it is some-
‘ times well that our good is hid from us. We are
‘ ready to take our corn and wine, and bestow them on
‘ other lovers. Were there not in our hearts a *spiritu-*
‘ *ally sensible* principle of corruption; and in our duties
‘ a discernible mixture of *self*; it would be impossible we
‘ should walk so humbly with God in a Covenant of
‘ Grace and pardoning mercy. It is a good life, which
‘ is attended with a *faith* of righteousness, and a *sense* of
‘ corruption—Oftentimes, holiness in the heart is more
‘ known by the opposition that is made there to it, than
‘ by its own prevalent working: the Spirit’s operation is
‘ known by the flesh’s opposition. We find a man’s

* Ut supra, p. 279—283.

‘ strength by the burdens he carries, and not the pace
‘ that he goes. *O wretched man that I am ! who shall*
‘ *deliver me from the body of this death ?* is a better evi-
‘ dence of grace and holiness, than, *God I thank thee,*
‘ *I am not as other men.* A heart pressed, grieved,
‘ burdened, not by the guilt of sin only, (which reflects
‘ with trouble on an awakened conscience) but by the
‘ close adhering *power* of indwelling sin, tempting,
‘ seducing, soliciting, hindering, captivating, conceiving,
‘ restlessly disquieting ; may from thence have as clear an
‘ evidence of holiness, as from a delightful fruit-bearing.
‘ What is it that is troubled and grieved in thee ? What
‘ is it, that seems to be almost killed and destroyed ;
‘ that cries out, complains, longs for deliverance ? Is it
‘ not the new creature ? Is it not the principle of spiri-
‘ tual life, whereof thou art partaker ? I speak not of
‘ trouble and disquietments for sin committed ; nor of
‘ fears and perturbations of mind, lest sin should break
‘ forth to loss, shame, ruin, dishonour ; nor of the con-
‘ tending of a convinced conscience, lest damnation
‘ should ensue ; but of the spirit against sin, out of a
‘ *hatred* and a *loathing* of it, upon all the mixed consi-
‘ derations of love, grace, mercy, fear, the beauty of
‘ holiness, excellency of communion with God, that are
‘ proposed in the gospel. If thou seemest to thyself to
‘ be only *passive* in these things ; to *do* nothing, but to
‘ *endure* the assaults of sin ; yet if thou art sensible, and
‘ standest under the stroke of it, as under the stroke of

‘ an enemy, there is the root of the matter. And as
‘ it is thus, as to the substance and *being* of holiness, so
‘ it is also as to the *degrees* of it. Degrees of holiness,
‘ are to be measured more by opposition, than self opera-
‘ tion. He may have more grace than another, who
‘ brings not forth so much fruit as the other ; because he
‘ hath more opposition, more temptation : and sense of the
‘ want of ALL, is a great sign of *somewhat* in the soul—
‘ It is certain, whilst we are in the flesh, our duties will
‘ taste of the vessel whence they proceed. Weakness,
‘ defilements, treachery, hypocrisy, will attend them.
‘ To this purpose, whatever some pretend to the contrary,
‘ is the complaint of the church, Isa. Ixiv. 6. The
‘ chaff, oftentimes, is so mixed with the wheat, that
‘ corn can scarce be discerned. And this know, *That the*
‘ *more spiritual any man is, the more he sees of his unspiritu-*
‘ *alness in his spiritual duties.* An outside performance
‘ will satisfy an outside Christianity. Job abhorred
‘ himself most, when he knew himself best. The clearer
‘ discoveries we have had of GOD, the viler will every
‘ thing of SELF appear. Nay, further, duties and per-
‘ formances are oftentimes very ill measured by us ;
‘ and those seem to be *first*, which indeed are *last*; and
‘ those to be *last*, which indeed are *first*. I do not doubt
‘ but a man, when he hath had distractions to wrestle,
‘ withal ; no outward advantage to further him ; no
‘ extraordinary provocations of hope, fear, or sorrow,
‘ on a natural account, in his duty ; may rise from his

‘ knees with thoughts that he hath done nothing in his duty but *provoked God*: when there hath been more workings of grace, in contending with the deadness cast on the soul by the condition that it is in; than when, by a concurrence of moved natural affections, and outward provocations, a frame hath been raised that hath, to the party himself, seemed to reach heaven: so that, it may be, this perplexity about duties, is nothing but what is common to the people of God, and which ought to be no obstruction to peace and settlement *.’

‘ Take heed of spending time in complaints, when vigorous actings of grace are your duty. Fruitlefs and heartless complaints, bemoanings of themselves and their condition, is the substance of the profession that some make. If they can object against themselves, and form complaints out of their conditions, they suppose they have done their duty. I have known some who have spent a good part of their time, in going up and down from one to another with their objections and complaints. These things are contrary to the life of faith—Yet some, I fear, may please themselves in such a course, as if it had somewhat of *eminency* in religion in it. Others, it may be, drive the same trade in their thoughts, although they make not, outwardly, such

* *On the Hundred Thirtieth Psalm*, p. 343, 344, 345.

‘ complaints. They are conversant, for the most part, ‘ with heartless despondings: and, in some, they are ‘ multiplied by their *natural constitutions*, or *dilempers*. ‘ Examples of this kind occur unto us every day—We ‘ must say, then, unto such heartless complainers, as ‘ God did to Joshua, *Get you up: why lie you thus upon* ‘ *your faces?* Do you think to mend your condition by ‘ *wishing* it better, or *complaining* it is so bad? Are ‘ your complaints of want of an interest in *forgivenes*s, ‘ a sanctified means to obtain it? not at all. You will ‘ not deal so with yourselves in things natural or civil. ‘ In such things you will take an industrious course for ‘ a remedy, or for relief. In things of the smalleſt ‘ importance in this world, and unto this life, you will ‘ not content yourselves with *wishing* and *complaining*. ‘ As though industry, in the use of natural means, for ‘ the attaining of natural ends, were the ordinance of ‘ God; and diligence in the use of spiritual means, for ‘ the obtaining of spiritual ends, were not!—Do you ‘ use diligence, study, endeavours, *all diligence*; diligence ‘ at all times, in all ways by God appointed; *all manner* ‘ of diligence, within and without, in private and public, ‘ to this end and purpose? Do you study, meditate, ‘ pray, watch, fast, neglect no opportunity, keep your ‘ hearts, search, try, examine yourselves, fly tempta- ‘ tions, and occasions of cooling, deadening, and stifling ‘ grace? Do these things abound in you? *Alas, you* ‘ *cannot do thus; you are so weak, so indisposed.* But,

‘ alas, you will not ; you will not part with your ease ;
‘ you will not crucify your lusts ; you will not use *all*
‘ *diligence* : but must come to it, or be contented to
‘ spend all your days in darkness, and to lie down in
‘ sorrow.

‘ Thus do men frequently miscarry. Is it any news
‘ for persons to bewail the folly of their nature and
‘ ways, in the *morning and evening* ; and yet scarce stand
‘ upon their watch *any part of the day*, or in any occa-
‘ sion of the day ? Is this giving *all diligence* ? Is this
‘ *working out our salvation with fear and trembling* ?
‘ And may we not see professors, even indulging to
‘ themselves in ways of vanity, folly, wrath, envy, sloth,
‘ and the like ; and yet complain at what a loss they
‘ are, how unquiet, how uncertain ? God forbid it
‘ should be otherwise with you ! or that we should
‘ endeavour to speak peace unto you, in any such a
‘ frame ! To hear of a person, that he walks slothfully,
‘ carelessly, or indulgeth his corruptions ; and to find
‘ him complaining, that he is at a loss, whether he have
‘ any interest in pardon, or no ; to give, or tender,
‘ comfort to such mourners, without a due admonition
‘ of their duty to *use diligence*, in the use of means, for
‘ to help on their deliverance out of the condition wherein
‘ they are, is to tender poison unto them—Spiritual

* *peace and sloth, will never dwell together in the same soul and conscience**.

Men living under the *profession* of religion, and not experiencing the *power, virtue, and efficacy* of it in their hearts; are, whatever they profess, very near to Atheism; or, at least, exposed to great temptations thereunto. If they profess they know God, but in works deny him, they *are abominable, and disobedient, and, unto every good work, reprobate.* Let such men lay aside tradition and custom; let them give up themselves to a free and rational consideration of things; and they will quickly find that all their profession is but a miserable selfdeceiving; and that, indeed, they believe not one word of the religion which they profess. For, of what their religion affirms to be *in themselves*, they find not any thing true, or real—He that professeth the gospel, avows that the death of Christ doth *crucify sin*; that faith *purifieth the heart*; that the Holy Ghost quickens, and enables the soul, unto duty; that God is good and gracious unto all that come unto him; that there is precious communion to be obtained with him, by Christ; that there is great joy in believing. These things are plainly, openly, frequently insisted on in the gospel. Hence the Apostle presseth men unto obedience, on the account of them; and, as it were,

* *Ut supra, Ep. 362, 363, 306, 307.*

‘ leaves them at liberty from it, if they were not so.
‘ Philip. ii. 1, 2. Now, if men live long in the pro-
‘ fession of these things, saying that *they are so*, but
‘ indeed find nothing of truth, reality, or power in them;
‘ have no experience of the effects of them, in their
‘ own hearts or souls; what stable ground have they of
‘ believing any thing else in the gospel, whereof they can-
‘ not have an *experience*? A man professeth that the
‘ death of Christ will *mortify sin*, and subdue corruption.
‘ Why doth he believe it? because it is so affirmed in
‘ the gospel. How, then, doth he find it to be so?
‘ Hath it this effect upon his soul, in his own heart?
‘ Not at all: he finds no such thing in him. How,
‘ then, can this man believe that Jesus Christ is the Son
‘ of God, because it is affirmed in the gospel; seeing
‘ that he finds no real truth of that which it affirms to
‘ be ‘in himself? So our Saviour argues, John iii. 12
‘ —Of all dangers, therefore, in profession, let pro-
‘ fessors take heed of this; namely, Of a *customary*,
‘ *traditional*, or *doctrinal* owning such truths, as ought
‘ to have *their effects and accomplishment in themselves*,
‘ whilst they have no experience of the reality and effi-
‘ cacy of them. This is plainly to have *a form of god-*
‘ *liness*, and to *deny the power thereof*: and of this sort
‘ of men do we see many turning Atheists, scoffers,
‘ and open apostates. They find, in themselves, that
‘ their profession was *a lie*; and that, in truth, they had
‘ none of those things which they talked of. And to

‘ what end should they continue longer in the avowing of
 ‘ that which is not? Besides, finding these things
 ‘ which they have professed to be *in* them, not to
 ‘ be so; they think, that what they have believed of
 ‘ things that are *without* them, are of no other nature,
 ‘ and so reject them altogether *.’

‘ Men *live in sin*, and therefore they do not *believe*
 ‘ *forgiveness of sin*. Faith in general *purifies the heart*.
 ‘ Our souls are purified *in obeying the truth*; and the life
 ‘ is made fruitful by it. Faith worketh *by works*, and
 ‘ makes itself perfect by them: and the doctrine con-
 ‘ cerning forgiveness, hath a special influence into all
 ‘ holiness †—No man can, then, believe forgiveness of
 ‘ sin, without a detestation and relinquishment of it—
 ‘ All that own the gospel must acknowledge this princi-
 ‘ ple; *The real belief of the pardon of sin, is prevalent*
 ‘ *with men not to live longer in sin*. But now, what are
 ‘ the greatest number of those who pretend to receive
 ‘ this truth? Are their hearts purified by it? Are their
 ‘ consciences purged? are their lives changed? Do they
 ‘ deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts? Doth for-
 ‘ giveness teach them so to do? Have they found it
 ‘ effectual to these purposes? Whence is it, then, that
 ‘ there is such a bleating, and bellowing ‡, to the con-

* *Ut supra*, p. 157, 158, 159.

† Acts xv. 19. 1 Pet. i. 22. James iii. 22. Titus ii. xi.
 12. ‡ 1 Sam. xv. 14.

‘trary amongst them? Some of you are drunkards,
‘some of you swearers, some of you unclean persons,
‘some of you liars, some of you worldly, some of you
‘haters of all the ways of Christ, and all his concern-
‘ments upon the earth: proud, covetous, boasters, self-
‘seekers, envious, wrathful, backbiters, malicious praters,
‘slanderers, and the like. And shall we think, that such
‘as these *believe* the forgiveness of sin? God forbid!
‘Again; Some of you are dark, ignorant, blind, utterly
‘unacquainted with the mystery of the gospel; nor do
‘at all make it your business to enquire into it. Either
‘you hear it not at all; or, negligently, slothfully,
‘customarily, to no purpose. Let not such persons
‘deceive their own souls. To *live* in sin, and yet to
‘*believe* the forgiveness of sin, is utterly impossible.
‘Christ will not be a minister of sin, nor give his gospel
‘to be a doctrine of licentiousness, for your sakes. Nor
‘shall you be forgiven, that you may be delivered to do
‘more abominations*. God forbid!

‘If any shall say, “That they thank God, they are
“no such *publicans* as those mentioned: they are no
“drunkards, no swearers, no unclean persons, nor the
“like; so that they are not concerned in this considera-
“tion: their lives and their duties give another account
“of them:” then, yet consider further, That the

* Jer. vii. 10.

‘ Pharisees were all that you say of yourselves ; and yet
‘ the greatest despisers of forgiveness that ever were in
‘ the world ; and that because they *hated the light*, on
‘ this account, that *their deeds were evil*. And for
‘ your *duties*, you mention, what, I pray, is the root
‘ and spring of them ? Are they influenced from this
‘ *faith of forgiveness*, you boast of, or no ? May it not
‘ be feared, that it is utterly otherwise ? You do not
‘ perform them because you *love the gospel*, but because
‘ you *fear the law*. If the truth were known, I doubt
‘ it would appear, that you get nothing by your *believing*
‘ *of pardon*, but an encouragement unto sin. Your
‘ *goodness*, such as it is, springs from another root. It
‘ may be, also, that you ward yourselves by it against
‘ the strokes of conscience, or the guilt of particular
‘ sins. This is as bad as the other. It is as good be
‘ encouraged unto sin, to *commit* it ; as be encouraged
‘ under sin, so as to be kept from *humiliation* for it.
‘ None under heaven are more remote from the belief
‘ of grace and pardon, than such persons are*.’

‘ Consider, [ye unconverted and thoughtless crea-
‘ tures !] that you are *sinners*, *great sinners*, *cursed sin-*
‘ *ners*. Some of you, it may be, worse than innumer-
‘ able of your fellow sinners were, who are now in hell.
‘ God might long since have cast you off everlastinglly,

* *Ubi supra*, p. 237, 238.

' from all expectation of mercy, and have caused all
' your hopes to perish: or, he might have left you alive
' and yet have refused to deal with you any more.
' He could have caused your sun to go down at noon-
' day, and have given you darkness instead of vision:
' He could respite your lives for a season, and yet *swear*
' *in his wrath*, that you should never *enter into his rest*:
' It is now otherwise: how long it may be so, nor you,
' nor I, know any thing at all. God only knows what
' will be your time, what your continuance. We are
' to speak *whilst it is called to-day*: and this is that, for
' the present, which I have to offer unto you; God
' declares that *there is forgiveness with him*; that your
' condition is not desperate, nor helpless—Some of
' you, it may be, are old in sins, and unacquainted
' with God: some of you, it may be, have been great
' sinners, scandalous sinners: and some of you, it may
' be, have reason to apprehend yourselves near the grave,
' and so also to hell. Some of you, it may be, have
' your consciences disquieted and galled: and it may
' be, some of you are under some outward troubles and
' perplexities, that cause you a little to look about you:
' and some of you, it may be, are in the madness of
' your natural strength and lusts; *your breasts are full of*
' *milk, and your bones of marrow*, and your hearts of sin,
' pride, and contempt of the ways of God. All is
' one: this word is *unto you all*; and I shall only mind
' you, That *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of*

‘*the living God.* You hear the voice, or read the words
‘of a poor worm ; but the message is the *message*, and
‘the word is the *word*, of Him who shaketh heaven
‘and earth. Consider, then, well what you have to do;
‘and what answer you will return unto Him who will
‘not be mocked *.’

‘ If you are, then, resolved to continue in your pre-
‘sent condition, I have no more to say unto you. *I*
‘*am pure from your blood*; in that I have declared unto
‘you the counsel of God in this thing; and so I must
‘leave you to a naked trial between the Great God and
‘your souls, at the last day. Poor creatures ! I even
‘tremble to think, how he *will tear you in pieces*, when
‘*there shall be none to deliver* ! Methinks, I see your
‘poor, destitute, forlorn souls ; forsaken of lusts, sins,
‘world, friends, angels, men ; trembling before the
‘throne of God, full of horror, and fearful expectation
‘of the dreadful sentence. Oh ! that I could mourn
‘over you whilst you are joined to all the living ; whilst
‘there is yet hope ! Oh, that in this your day, you
‘knew the things of your peace † !’

* *Ubi supra*, p. 244, 248, 249.

† *Ibid.*



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